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THE
PILGRIM ROAD

W. B. FITZGERALD



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THE PILGRIM ROAD

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THE *History* PILGRIM ROAD

A Series of Studies in
the 'Pilgrim's Progress'

BY
W. B. FITZGERALD



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FOREWORD

So many masters of thought have written on the *Pilgrim's Progress*, that it is with a feeling of presumption that one dares to add this little volume to the books already published. One idea, running through the following pages, has not, I think, received the attention it deserves from others, viz. that in Bunyan's allegory we have a mirror of experience at the different stages of life from youth to age, showing us with great subtlety the characteristic perils and temptations at each period. It is with the hope of making a much-loved book better understood by a generation that is in danger of neglecting it that I have made this small literary venture.

W. B. FITZGERALD.

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I

THE COUNTRY OF THE PILGRIMAGE

'As we are swept along the stream of time, lights and shadows shift their places, mountain plateaux turn to sharp peaks, mountain ranges dissolve into vapour. The river which has been gliding deep and slow along the plain leaps suddenly over a precipice and plunges foaming down a sunless gorge. In the midst of changing circumstances the central question remains the same—What am I? What is this world in which I appear and disappear like a bubble? Who made me, and what am I to do? . . . The Pilgrim's Progress is and will remain unique of its kind—an imperishable monument of the form in which the problem presented itself to a person of singular truthfulness, simplicity, and piety, who, after many struggles, accepted the Puritan creed as an adequate solution of it.'

FROUDE.

The Pilgrim Road

I

THE COUNTRY OF THE PILGRIMAGE

THE *Pilgrim's Progress* is a book of paradox. It is at once universal and insular. Wide as humanity, it is nevertheless narrow in its social outlook. It is so truly catholic in spirit that it may be described as a book for all men, and yet its author was a man of little education and meagre knowledge of the great world. Written in the homely phraseology of an English village, it has been translated into seventy or eighty foreign languages, including those of Asia and Africa, as well as the majority of European tongues. Its theology is Puritan in colouring, and yet it makes a strange appeal to men of all creeds and nationalities. There is even a Roman Catholic version. Naturally, the last-named version is slightly modified. There is no mention of Giant Pope, crazy and stiff in his limbs, sitting at his cave mouth grinning at the

pilgrims as they go by, and muttering, ' You will never mend till more of you be burned.' But the very existence of such an edition illustrates the truth of Dean Stanley's words that the *Pilgrim's Progress* is ' one of the few books that act as a religious bond to the whole of Christendom.'

The Pilgrim Road starts just outside the City of Destruction, by which John Bunyan means ' the World,' as he explains in a marginal note on the very first page.

Bunyan's world was very limited. It was the England of the seventeenth century—Puritan England. Its colouring is purely English. Except for some slight reference to the Rows of the Nations in Vanity Fair—Italian Row, French Row, and so forth—there is nothing in the book to suggest even the existence of a larger world beyond our own island. You never get the feeling of the beyond. All the characters are Englishmen of Puritan and Restoration times, and most of them are drawn to the life.

To John Bunyan the world was doomed.

' O my dear wife,' said Christian, ' . . . I am for certain informed that this our City will be burned with fire from heaven, in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee my wife, and you my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin ; except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape may be found, whereby we may be delivered.'

Yes, it was a doomed and sinful world, and, to the Puritan mind, the one and only thought was how a man might be saved from the destruction that would certainly come.

Now to understand the Puritan point of view we must remember what England was like before the Commonwealth and after the Restoration. When the great days of Elizabeth were past, the nation fell on evil times. The court of the Stuarts was notoriously immoral, and the extravagance and licentiousness of the royal circle corrupted the people until 'every great house in the country became a sty of uncleanness.' Godless amusements, coarse theatricals, and cruel sports such as cock-fighting and bear-baiting brought about a speedy degeneration in public manners, and there was little or no protest from those in the high places of authority in the Church.

Against this evil state of affairs the Puritans, hitherto a persecuted minority, set their faces like flint, and the best elements in the nation rallied to their support. During the Commonwealth the regenerative forces became dominant, and the corrupt tendencies of the time were put down with a strong hand. Probably the pendulum swung too far in an opposite direction. Manners and customs were regulated with harsh severity. Many innocent amusements were banned because of their associations. At the same time it cannot be denied that Puritan rule

steadied the whole nation, and produced a strong robust type of character which is still, though modified by time, the backbone of English life.

Then came the Restoration, and, for a time, the old evils again became rampant. The court was more corrupt than ever. Coarse wit, gambling, vice, and intemperance were general in the circles round the king. The famous *Diaries* of Samuel Pepys give us startling glimpses of the utter godlessness of the time. It is not to be supposed, however, that the whole nation was carried away by the rebound. There were many good men both in Church and state. Milton was writing *Paradise Lost*; Izaak Walton was revealing his gentle saintly soul in *The Compleat Angler*. Barrow, Ken, and Jeremy Taylor gave distinction to the Church of England, while Richard Baxter and John Bunyan were foremost among the ranks of Nonconformity. At the same time the pleasures of the day were so completely identified with coarseness and irreligion that it is easy to understand how to serious-minded men like John Bunyan there was only one alternative. Christian men must be all or nothing. In dress, habits of life, modes of thought, even in speech, they must cut themselves off from the gay, reckless world which seemed to them the very embodiment of evil. Harassed and ridiculed by their persecutors, their thoughts turned longingly to another and better life beyond. The world was the devil's ground through which the

Christian must resolutely and painfully journey to the Celestial City. The way was beset with perils, and the great recompense of reward was only to be won by uncompromising fidelity to the ideal. The Puritan view was similar to that of the early Methodists, who, in like manner, had to make their choice between a world in which every pleasure seemed tainted and a life of severe self-denial ; and there is no doubt that the men of the seventeenth century would have sung with fervour lines which, until a few years ago, had a place in the Methodist hymn-book :

Nothing is worth a thought beneath
But how I may escape the death
Which never, never dies.

In our day the Christian outlook is larger, and, we believe, more truly Christian. The world is no longer an evil place. It has, in fact, become intensely interesting. Life is crowded with ten thousand interests, the majority of which were utterly unknown to our forefathers. The conquest of earth, air, and sea by human genius ; the marvellous expansion of ideas in art, literature, and music ; the social betterment of the people ; all these things capture the imagination, and we rightly regard these realms as open to our exploration. They are not only good in themselves, but we may take possession of them in the name of the Lord of Life. We claim them

for Christ. The River of Death, which Bunyan regarded as a boundary betweeen a doomed world and the Celestial Country, we look upon as a river flowing *through* Immanuel's land. The territory on both sides is the King's.

Nevertheless life is still a pilgrimage, and in spite of our changed outlook there is need for all the heroic qualities described in this allegory. And this for three reasons.

In the first place, though we view the world with other eyes than those of the Puritan dreamer, and find in it much that is good, beautiful, and divine, we have still to acknowledge that there is something strangely wrong with it. There is no room for blind optimism. It is not for Christians to say lightly, 'All's right with the world,' when thinkers who stand outside Christianity altogether take an entirely opposite view. Even Nietzsche, with his bitter antagonism to Christianity, bases all his theories on the assumption that things are wrong, terribly wrong : and the opinion of such men carries weight, though we may not believe that Nietzsche's race of supermen, proud, pitiless, and all-conquering, would make things any better.

Then there is always the danger lest our interest in the present world should dim our vision of the next. We may get so absorbed in the work and pleasure of to-day as to lose all thought of that Great To-morrow towards which all human life is moving. It must never be for-

gotten that this life is only the vestibule of one more vast, and we recognize with satisfaction tendencies in modern thought that look in this direction. ‘We must move with the times,’ said one eager friend to another. ‘No,’ was the reply, ‘ought we not rather to move with the eternities?’

And further, the very fact that the life beyond is a reality ought to make us the more in earnest about claiming this life for Christ. The man who believes most intensely in the Celestial City ought to do most to make his own city clean, wholesome, and beautiful. Every effort for the amelioration of social wrong, for the betterment of human conditions of life, is in perfect harmony with the pilgrim spirit. Even while we look for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God, we must never forget that the city of God is to be realized on earth, and it is our privilege to add at least one stone as we pass. Such an ideal ought to awaken the finest enthusiasm. As William Blake sang, a pilgrim of the unseen, if ever there was one :

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England’s fair and pleasant land.

When all is said we feel that Bunyan’s picture of man’s amazing journey through life touches the depths of human nature. There is mystery

all around us. If for nothing else the study of the Pilgrim Way will stir within us the old questions: ‘ Whence do I come ? ’ ‘ Whither am I going ? ’ ‘ What is the meaning of this strange gift of life ? ’

‘ Like a God-created, fire-breathing, Spirit host, we emerge from the Inane : haste stormfully across the astonished Earth : then plunge again into the Inane. Earth’s mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage : can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive ? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped in : the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence ?—O heaven, whither ? Sense knows not : Faith knows not ; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.’

II

THE FACT BEHIND THE ALLEGORY

'He takes us by the hand and whispers to us. Is it thus and thus with thee? and then he tells us that he has gone through it all, and by God's mercy has survived.'

MARK RUTHERFORD.

*'His language was not ours;
To my belief God spoke: no tinker has such
powers.'*

R. BROWNING, '*Ned Bratts.*'

'To see Jesus Christ, then, to see Him as He is, to see Him as He is in glory, is a sight that is worth going from relations, and out of the body, and through the jaws of death to see.'

JOHN BUNYAN.

II

THE FACT BEHIND THE ALLEGORY

To understand the Pilgrim Road it is necessary to understand John Bunyan himself. He knew every step of the way, and describes it to us in the terms of his own experience. In *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* he has given us a human document of surpassing interest. It is the story of his own life, and every page illuminates his more famous allegory. A brief study of his journeyings towards the light will help us to follow with keener interest and larger comprehension the steps of Christian and his companions.

Bunyan was born in 1628, the year of that epoch-making measure, the Petition of Right. He was a schoolboy in 1637 when Hampden refused to pay the infamous tax of ship-money. He lived right through the Commonwealth and the Restoration and died in 1688, when the Revolution ended the rule of the Stuarts for ever.

His early life was spent in the typical English village of Elstow. Round the village green stood gabled cottages, with peaked dormer windows

and porches covered with clustering rose and honeysuckle. At the south end of the green was an old church, with belfry or 'steeple-house,' twenty feet away from the main structure. The same five bells that Bunyan delighted in are still in use to-day. In the centre of the open space was an ancient market-cross, and, to the north, the market-hall or moothouse, built of wood and brick with old carved gables.

Here the dreamer of the future spent his youth and early manhood. He was by no means a vicious lad. He was never immoral, and, as far as we know, neither drunken nor dishonest. Perhaps, as some have thought, he was morbidly hard on himself. He was simply godless. He told extravagant lies and swore to the truth of them. He earned the reputation of being the hardest swearer in the village. He learned little at school, and that little he soon forgot. He was an atrocious writer to the end of his life.

He married when he was just turned twenty. He and his wife were as 'poor as owlets.' They 'had not a dish or a spoon between them.' But his wife was a woman of character, and from the first tried to turn his thoughts to serious things.

Then began the great struggle. Even as a boy his sleep was disturbed by terrible dreams. When describing the Interpreter's House in the *Pilgrim's Progress* he pictured a man in bed, trembling and depressed. He had seen in

imagination the black heavens bursting into flame and the Judge looking down on him with searching eye. It was one of Bunyan's own visions of the night.

Several events in early manhood stirred him to the depths.

The first was a sermon on Sabbath-breaking, which produced for a time a mighty impression and sent him home 'sermon-smitten.' Yet the very same day he was out on the village green playing tip-cat. But just as he was in the act of striking the cat a voice seemed to say, 'Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?' For a few minutes he stood dazed. To his vivid imagination the face of Christ looked straight down at him from the heavens overhead. Then, desperately turning his eyes away, he stifled conviction and went on with the game.

After this he went from bad to worse until, one day, standing at a neighbour's shop-window cursing and swearing, the woman rebuked him as 'the ugliest fellow for swearing that ever she heard in her life.' She was herself 'a loose, ungodly wretch,' and a reproof from such a quarter stung him to the quick. It cut more deeply than the sermon. He hung his head with shame and gave up swearing for ever.

This was at least the beginning of better things. One by one he gave up his evil practices and shook off his godless companions.

Before long he began to earn the repute of being a religious man.

Still there was a burden of which he could not rid himself. There was a trouble of soul which no outward reformation could cure.

It was in Bedford that the first gleam of light came to him. Listening to three or four poor women, sitting at a cottage doorway in the sunshine, he heard them speak of a change of heart, and of their joy in the love of God. It was what he wanted above all things, and his heart softened as he talked with them.

About this time he had a dream. He saw a high mountain surrounded by a high wall. There, in warm sunlight, were the poor Christians of Bedford, while he, without, shivered in darkness, frost, and snow. And he longed to be with them.

'At the last,' he writes, 'I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I attempted to pass. Now the passage being very strait and narrow I made many efforts to get in, but all in vain, even until I was very near beat out, by striving to get in. At last, with great striving, methought I did first get in my head, and after that by a sidling striving my shoulders and my whole body. Then was I exceeding glad, and went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted with the light and heat of their sun.'

Bunyan pondered over that narrow Way. He saw its meaning. None could enter into life unless they were in downright earnest.

‘Here was only room for Body and Soul, but not for Body and Soul and Sin.’

It is not too much to say that in that dream we have the germ of the *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

His feet were now firmly on the Pilgrim Road, but he had still a long way to travel. He had to pass through many a struggle, many an hour of despondency, many a tussle with unseen powers, before he gained real peace of soul.

He was the victim of horrible temptations.

More than half of them were due to a misuse of Scripture. Words came into his mind and terrified him to such an extent that it never occurred to him to look whether they would bear the interpretation put upon them. He swung from transitory hope into deepest melancholy. Gleams of sunshine were followed by profound despair.

It is unnecessary to recall the whole series of strange and even grotesque imaginings that troubled John Bunyan at this period of his life. To him they were intensely real. He was literally hunted by texts.

‘I was much followed,’ he writes, ‘by this scripture, “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you.”’ And sometimes

it would sound so loud within me, yea, and as it were call so strongly after me, that once above all the rest I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking verily that some man had, behind me, called to me : being at a great distance, methought he called so loud.'

He had no peace or comfort even in prayer.

' Sometimes I have thought I should see the devil, nay, thought I have felt him, behind me, pull my clothes. He would be, also, continually at me in the time of prayer to have done ; " Break off, make haste, you have prayed enough, and stay no longer " ; still drawing my mind away.'

But at the end of this stony, painful road he reached the Cross, and, as he pathetically says, the Lord did ' fully and graciously discover Himself unto me.'

' I remember that one day, as I was travelling into the country and musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, and considering of the enmity that was in me to God, that scripture came in my mind, *He hath made peace by the Blood of His Cross.* By which I was made to see, both again, and again, and again, that day, that God and my soul were Friends by this Blood ; yea, I saw that the Justice of God and my

. . . sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other through this Blood. This was a good day to me: I hope I shall not forget it.'

Not many go through a conflict so intense and prolonged as the one described in such detail in *Grace Abounding*. Much of it was undoubtedly unnecessary. The superstition and witchcraft of his day were largely responsible for the demons of imagination that pulled his clothes, twitched his hair, shouted after him on the roads, and made the battle so horribly realistic. His imperfect understanding of the Bible, which went side by side with a knowledge of the language of Scripture which any modern Christian might envy, accounted for a great deal more. Yet it was all gain in the end. His tender conscience, which ached at the very thought of sin and refused to rest satisfied with any false hope, held him back for a time, but the prize, when won, was infinitely more precious.

John Bunyan's vision of the Cross was by no means the end of his spiritual conflict, and in that we find a close parallel to the story of Christian. His later experiences will serve to illuminate more than one incident of the journey along the Pilgrim Way. But, in the meantime, the remembrance of Bunyan's story will give a background of intense reality to the early scenes of the famous allegory.

III

LIFE'S HANDICAP

'Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Make level the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: Remove thy foot from evil.'

BOOK OF PROVERBS.

'Look out for the bright, for the brightest side of things, and keep thy face constantly turned to it.'

JEREMY BENTHAM, *'Deontology.'*

'Whither fly I? To what place can I safely fly? To what mountain? To what den? To what strong house? What castle shall I hold? What walls shall hold me? Whithersoever I go, my self followeth me.'

ST. AUGUSTINE.

'Always there is a black spot in our sunshine, it is the shadow of ourselves.'

CARLYLE, *'Sartor Resartus.'*

III

LIFE'S HANDICAP

'I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back.'

THE great burden is Life's Handicap; not Christian's alone, not merely John Bunyan's—it is all men's burden, the load of sin with all its guilt and sorrow. Christian started with it at the beginning of his pilgrimage, and he lost it at the Cross; and between those two points Bunyan describes five episodes.

The first, and in many ways the most significant, is the Gleam of the Shining Light.

There is a striking sentence of Robert Schumann's, spoken of his art, but equally true of spiritual things :

'A rosy light is dawning in the sky : whence it cometh I know not : but in any case, O youth, make for the light.'

Such was the first counsel that Christian received from his friend Evangelist at the moment when he turned his back on the City of Destruction. ‘ Make for the light ! ’

‘ Whither shall I fly ? ’ Christian asks Evangelist.

‘ Do you see yonder Wicket Gate ? ’

‘ No.’

‘ Do you see yonder shining light ? ’

‘ I think I do.’

‘ Keep that light in your eye and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate.’

That is exquisite. No penitent soul ever failed to reach the Cross who followed the shining light. At the outset of the Christian life men may be sorely puzzled about repentance, faith, and conversion, but all will grow clear to those who make for the light. Doubts and questionings lie thick about the path of the man who sets out on the quest of a better life. If he looks at himself he is discouraged ; if he looks around him he is perplexed ; but, looking up, there is always some gleam of light by following which he may gain deliverance. In the Annual Letter of the Society of Friends, some years ago, there was one unforgettable sentence :

‘ If thy soul be walking but in the twilight look towards that quarter of the sky from which light seems to be dawning.’

The advice is sound, it is reasonable, it is of universal application, for in the direction in which we look so shall we certainly move. It is the same thought that Tennyson embodied in his musical lines 'Merlin and the Gleam':

Not of the sunlight
Not of the moonlight
Not of the starlight

. . . .

After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam.

The next episode is that of the Quaking Morass. When Bunyan himself resolved to live a better life, the reformation, as we have seen, brought him no happiness. For months he was in the depths of despair. It is not so with every one, but it was unquestionably the case with him, as he makes plain in *Grace Abounding*:

'I found myself as on a miry bog that shook if I did but stir; and was as there left both of God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all good things.'

For a time he was literally engulfed.

'I fell therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair. . . . Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure I am given up to the Devil, and to a reprobate mind. And thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.'

So Christian, in whom we continually recognize the Dreamer himself, stumbles at the very commencement of his journey into the Slough of Despond ; but while Pliable, his companion, scrambles out on the side nearest home, Christian still keeps his face towards the light, and Help comes, just in time to guide his feet to the stepping-stones, which he ought never to have missed if he had been more wary. It is one of the striking features of the allegory that, whatever the dangers of the way, there is always help near at hand for any poor pilgrim that finds himself in difficulties.

The episode of the side-track to Sinai was not included in the first edition to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, but there are few passages that show greater insight into human nature. Worldly Wiseman, who meets Christian with all the mud of the Slough on his clothes, considers him a fool for his pains, and tells him so. ' Why, man,' he says in effect, ' this path you are seeking is the most troublesome way in the whole world. Your burden ? Oh, certainly you must get rid of that, and the sooner the better.' And he directs him to the town of Morality, and to one Legality, who

' has skill to help men off with such burdens as thine from their shoulders, and . . . to cure those that are somewhat crazed in their

wits with their burdens. . . . If he be not at home he hath a pretty young man to his son whose name is Civility that can do it as well as the old gentlemen himself.'

The brief dialogue that follows is curiously parallel to the one with Evangelist :

' Which is my way to this honest man's house ? '

' Do you see yonder high hill ? '

' Yes, very well.'

' By that hill you must go, and the first house you come at is his.'

The hill was Sinai, the mountain of the Law, and its lightnings terrified the pilgrim. Under its frowning precipices and overhanging rocks he lost sight of the Gleam, and it was only with the renewed help of Evangelist that he was set on the right road once more.

Christian never reached the House of Legality, but Bunyan did, to his sorrow.

' I fell to some outward Reformation. . . . I thought I pleased God as well as any man in England.'

' I set the Commandments before me for my way to heaven,' to quote his words more in detail, ' and, as I thought, did keep them well sometimes.'

Then he would ' break one ' and ' say I was sorry and promise God to do better next time,'

and so on, in a vicious circle. ‘I found,’ wrote Bunyan, ‘that unless guilt of conscience was taken off the right way, that is, by the Blood of Christ, a man grew rather worse for the loss of his Trouble of mind than better.’

It was the present power of sin that caused Bunyan such acute distress, but there is another very serious consideration which cannot be overlooked. Shallow creeds leave out of account the fact that, even if an unbroken reformation were possible, the burden would remain. No human power can blot out the past. As Dr. Horton has powerfully expressed the thought : ‘The evil that I did passed out into the universe with an influence, the extent of which I can never measure, and the force of which I can never arrest. Just as, pulsing out from this sun, goes the light which is reaching the nearest fixed star, in the Centaur, after three and a half years’ travelling, and then will go on and on, reaching different systems years and centuries after, so the sin I committed was as a little ray of lurid light ; it passed out into an infinite universe, travelled, and is travelling, through space. I can never arrest it, and I can never undo it. It is done, and is attached to me, as the doer, for ever.’¹ That is the tragedy of sin ; years of right conduct cannot atone for the wrong-doing of the past.

¹ Horton, *Does the Cross Save?*

The fourth episode is that of the Wicket Gate, the definite entrance upon the Pilgrim Road. It is not merely the 'gate of repentance,' as so frequently understood, for repentance had already begun. It stands rather for decision, for the committal of the will, for a final abandonment of all side-tracks and evasions, and a resolve to go through with the journey to the very end.

It is noticeable, too, that the enemy has his outposts close to the Gate. So long as the burdened sinner can be kept from any decisive step the great enemy of souls has a distinct advantage over him. Hoping, longing, struggling, are not enough. The inner conflict must be brought to a crisis. One reason why religion is so often ineffective is its indefiniteness. Men and women just fall short of committing themselves by whole-hearted decision.

Not far from the Gate is the Interpreter's House. When a man gets his feet firmly set upon the upward way, even before he actually loses his burden, he begins to see all things in a new light. His old worldly principles give way to a belief in the strength of right, in the reality of the unseen world, and the need for heroic determination. The Interpreter himself is the Holy Spirit, the Helper and Strengthener promised by Christ to His disciples. The scenes that Christian witnesses are a series of acted parables, each with its warning or fortifying message. They are all worth studying, and all have their bearing upon

■ more modern age ; but perhaps the most inspiring is that of the Valiant Man, with his decisive ' Set down my name, sir,' followed up by his determined fight for entrance to the Palace. That is a spirit we can never have too much of. A story is told of Diogenes, the Cynic, that in his youth he wished to become the pupil of Antisthenes the Stoic, a surly old philosopher who drove away all comers. Though his request was refused, he persisted, and when Antisthenes menaced him with his knotty staff, Diogenes stood his ground and said, ' Strike ! you will not find a stick hard enough to conquer my perseverance.' We need to-day a persistency that no opposition can daunt ; and when the world finds that the stick breaks before the Christian's faith gives way, it will have a far deeper respect for religion.

Looking back over this first stage of the journey the insistent thought is of the Burden. And perhaps we are tempted to ask ourselves if Bunyan is guilty of exaggeration. Was he morbidly and extravagantly sensitive in feeling himself, and attributing to Christian, such a sense of the wickedness of his own heart ? We can only say here that if we study human nature, and especially if we sit at the feet of the saintliest souls this world has ever known, we shall be more and more convinced of the reality and evil of sin.

Sin is one of those primary facts it is impossible for us to ignore. ' It starts with the

history of our race, it runs through all ages and lands, mars the peace of every soul, trips up the careless, mocks at the endeavours of the strong after reformation, cripples the noblest worker, and claims the devotion of the saint. Christian men of all ranks and degrees have confessed it ; Christian literature has been fashioned by it into its tenderest and loftiest cadences, as men mourn over their defeats or rejoice over their victories.'¹

Many theories have been invented to explain it away.

Some argue that it is merely a phase of human development, which need not seriously concern us any more than we trouble about growing pains in the body.

Others maintain that it is natural and unavoidable, 'akin to dirt, to disease, to weeds,' and the 'higher man' need not worry about it. But, leaving the question as to how the 'higher man' has reached his higher estate, what are we to say to the lower man, in whom sin is a disease indeed, and one that baffles human cure ?

Still another school, little in touch with the terrible problems of real life, would teach us that sin is merely negative. Good is the only 'being,' and sin is simply unreal. But as a thoughtful writer aptly comments, 'to tell me that sin within me is "non-existent" is a kind

¹ *The Psychology of the Christian Soul.* George Steven, M.A.

of sorry jest. The bad in me is as real as the good. I apply to it every available test of reality and find it existent in everything which is most real in my being—thought, affection, will, habit, character. Indeed, if I do not take care, it will become my most essential self, and I may be a bad man in every sense in which I am a man at all. And around me in the world I see—not that I judge them, but I see them—bad men as distinctly as good men, and badness possessing all the reality which any kind of life does.¹

No, unless we adopt a philosophy of fatalism, and conclude that everything is fixed, settled, and determined, and that we do things because we must—a theory quite inconsistent with the remorse which men unquestionably feel in many cases for bad things done—we are compelled to recognize the ‘burden’ as a real handicap, and one which ought to be removed. And when we have reached this point we are face to face with another stupendous fact, that the Cross alone saves ; that is to say, that it is the only means by which we may be freed from the guilt of the past, and be made strong to do right in the future.

At the same time John Bunyan, with his characteristic breadth of thought, recognized the immense variety of religious experience. There are many pilgrims travelling the same road, and their temptations, difficulties, and feelings are

¹ *The Facts of Life.* P. Carnegie Simpson, D.D.

by, no means identical. They differ according to age, circumstances, and temperament. Some of them escape the Slough of Despond altogether ; others have sunshine where Christian was in darkness and agony of soul. Some of Bunyan's touches of character are humorous in their lifelike accuracy. There is Mr. Fearing, who ' lay roaring at the edge of the Slough of Despond for a month,' and yet in the Valley of Humiliation was as happy as a king ; Feeblemind, who had to be carried up the Hill Difficulty, and is tenderly treated by all the Lord's servants ; and Valiant-for-Truth, who heard of Christian's adventures and ' fell into a burning haste to follow.' Yet all, in common, are seeking deliverance. The whole allegory is meaningless if we omit the fact of Sin. To some, as with Bunyan himself, it was ' a burden intolerable to be borne,' to others of a different disposition the evil is less thought of than the good which is to supplant it ; but every incident of the Pilgrim Road is based upon the conviction that there is something wrong with human nature—something wrong which must be set right if the spirit of man is to reach its goal.

IV

THE WAY OF THE HOLY CROSS

*'I have always had one lode-star; now
As I look back, I see that I have wasted
Or progressed as I looked towards that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God.'*

BROWNING.

*'When faith centres on Jesus power comes—
new life—"Out of Him shall flow rivers of
living water." Impotence goes, and a new world
opens, a possibility of real life begins.'*

R. F. HORTON, D.D.

*'This hath He done and shall we not adore Him?
This shall He do, and can we still despair?
Come let us quickly fling ourselves before Him,
Cast at His feet the burthen of our care.'*

MYERS, 'St. Paul.'

IV

THE WAY OF THE HOLY CROSS

THE transfiguration of the Cross is one of the amazing facts of history. To the old world it was the symbol of death, darkness, and despair: but to the new, of life, light, and hope. Once it was the witness to the actualities of slavery, tyranny, and crime; but now it stands a protest against these things, and a promise that they shall cease. It is the pledge of our faith that the world's history shall at length be crowned by a Golden Age. The Crucified One speaks to us as He spoke in vision to Adam and Eve, in Mrs. Browning's *Drama of Exile*:

Look on Me

As I shall be uplifted on a Cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread;
So shall I lift up in My piercèd hands,
Not into dark but light—not unto death
But life—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,
The whole creation.

There have been many Utopias, but the men who have really moved the world, who have helped to stir it out of deadness and corruption,

have ever recognized in the Cross the supreme lifting power of human history.

Never perhaps has the appeal of the Cross been more simply, more exquisitely presented than in Bunyan's allegory. In short, crisp, homely words he draws a picture that lives in the memory. Christian leaves the Interpreter's House, and, resolved to trust no more to quacks and adventurers, starts hopefully on his journey. Then, in Bunyan's words :

' He came at a place somewhat ascending : And upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below in the bottom, a Sepulchre.

. . . So I saw in my Dream, that just as Christian came up with the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. . . . Then he stood for a while, to look and wonder : for it was very surprising to him, that the sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks.'

Beautiful as this passage is, who but John Bunyan would have thought of the scene which immediately follows :

' As he stood looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him and saluted

him with "Peace be to thee": so the first said to him "Thy sins be forgiven." The second stript him of his rags and clothed him with change of raiment. The third also set a mark in his forehead and gave him a Roll with a Seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the Celestial Gate. So they went their way.'

Three Shining Ones, meeting man at the Cross, one in their salutation of Peace, triune in their gracious gifts. It is a great thought that in the moment of God's tender, forgiving love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reveal themselves. It is not merely Jesus that forgives, not the Holy Spirit only that works the change, but God in all His glorious perfection.

Heaven comes down our soul to meet,
And glory crowns the mercy seat.

. Many of the old hymns are full of the idea of the Trinity in man's salvation. There is an illustration in Watts's hymn, where the poet rises from the thought of God in nature to His works of Grace, and continues—

Here the whole Deity is known,
Nor dares a creature guess
Which of the glories brighter shone,
The justice or the grace.

Or, as Charles Wesley puts it still more explicitly :

Ready the Father is to own
And kiss His late-returning son ;
Ready your loving Saviour stands,
And spreads for you His bleeding hands.

Ready the Spirit of His love
Just now the stony to remove,
To apply, and witness with the blood,
And wash, and seal the sons of God.

Bunyan makes no attempt to frame a theory of the Atonement. He had such a theory, no doubt, but in his portraiture of the soul at the foot of the Cross he never so much as hints at it. Christian, who was a most rationalistic pilgrim, drops all his questionings and simply looks. Great thinkers have devoted all the wealth of intellect to the study of the redemptive work of Christ, and at the end of it all have had to say with St. Paul, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God' ; but for the penitent soul all is summed up in the line, 'There is life for a look at the Crucified One.' As William Arthur wrote in *The Tongue of Fire*, referring to this very incident in the *Pilgrim's Progress* :

'Look straight to the Cross. For pardon, for escape from hell, for rest and hope and purity, look thither, thither, only thither. If thy burden fall not at once, yet still look,

look to the Cross, and fall it will, far sooner and far more surely than if thou attempt to untie it by thy arguments.'

In a tractate of Bunyan's, called *The Heavenly Footman*, published ten years after his death, he speaks of the Cross as the Waymark to the Celestial City, and adds, 'Thou must go close by it, thou must touch it, nay, thou must take it up.' The words are suggestive of the further thought that the whole Pilgrim Way is the Way of the Holy Cross. Everything, henceforth, is seen in its light. In its *light*—not under its shadow. It illuminates, not darkens. Life will have its hardships and perils whether we are Christians or not; but those who accept the rule of the Cross realize a wealth of joy, and a strength of victory, which transfigure life's hardships. It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than the one between the Puritan tinker of Elstow and the monastic recluse who wrote *The Imitation of Christ*—the only book which compares with the *Pilgrim's Progress* in the breadth of its appeal to human nature—but again and again the allegory and the meditation express the same deep-rooted experience. Here, for instance, is what the saintly mystic has to say about the 'Royal Way of the Holy Cross.' It illustrates every page of Christian's story :

' Why fearest thou to take up the cross
which leadeth thee to a kingdom? In the

cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection against our enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross joy of spirit, in the cross the height of virtue, in the cross the perfection of sanctity.

' Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

' The cross is always ready, and everywhere waits for thee. Thou canst not escape it whithersoever thou runnest ; for wheresoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt ever find thyself. Both above and below, without and within, which way soever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the cross ; and everywhere of necessity thou must hold fast patience, if thou wilt have inward peace, and enjoy an everlasting crown.'

The incident of the Cross and Sepulchre reminds us once again of the large-heartedness and catholicity of John Bunyan. Human nature is infinitely varied. It is not given to all to have so mighty a vision of the Cross as Christian had. Of the many genuine pilgrims described in the two parts of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, very few even mention the Cross. Faithful passed by it with-

out notice, though he met with One who had holes in His hands, His feet, and His side, and thereby recognized Him as our Lord. Hopeful, telling the story of his conversion, said, ‘I did not see Him with my bodily eyes, but with the eyes of mine understanding.’ Nevertheless, the spiritual vision was enough. ‘It made me love a Holy life, and long to do something for the Honour and Glory of the name of the Lord Jesus. Yea, I thought, that had I now a thousand gallons of blood in my body I could spill it all for the sake of the Lord Jesus.’

Men are drawn to Jesus Christ in many ways. To some the thought of the Atoning Death is central and supreme, while to others the human life and death of God made man—the Incarnation as a whole—makes powerful appeal. The ethical teaching of the Gospel grips certain types of mind, while others dwell more on the mystical union with Christ. Yet with all it is Christ Himself, His whole Personality, that saves. What matters most is not what particular aspect attracts us, but that we are attracted, and that the spiritual change takes place. As a writer, quoted already, wisely says :

‘ It is communion with this entire Jesus Christ that saves : the concentration of heart and mind on this Person, drawing us by His teaching and working, and above all subduing us by His death on the Cross. The Cross indeed gathers together in one

supreme act of sacrifice His teaching and His work : for it reveals, as nothing else can, the evil that lies slumbering, or (it may be) raging in the heart of each of us : and reveals still more the unsearchable love of God for us and the passion of Christ to redeem us. Our personality is liberated, elevated, purified, through contact and abiding communion with the Personality of Jesus Christ, through a deepening comprehension of His teaching, and increasing obedience to His purpose.'¹

¹ *The Psychology of the Christian Soul.* George Steven, M.A.

V

THE HARD ROAD

*'One may go wrong in many different ways,
but right only in one; and so the former is easy,
the latter difficult: easy to miss the mark, but
hard to hit it.'*

ARISTOTLE, 'Ethics.'

*'Without labour there is no arriving at rest,
nor without fighting can the victory be reached.*

*'If thou art unwilling to suffer, thou refusest
to be crowned; but if thou desire to be crowned,
fight manfully, endure patiently.*

*'Without a combat thou canst not attain unto
the crown of patience.*

*'Be thou therefore always prepared for the
fight, if thou wilt have the victory.'*

A KEMPIS, 'Imitation of Christ.'

*'Long is the way and hard, that out of hell
leads up to light.'*

MILTON.

*'Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joy three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
the throe.'*

BROWNING, 'Rabbi ben Ezra.'

V

THE HARD ROAD

THE Pilgrim Road is a hard way. After the Cross the Hill Difficulty. And it may be well at the outset to get firm hold of this thought which runs through all Bunyan's writings, and is confirmed by the experience of all earnest souls, that the spiritual life calls for the concentration of every power and faculty. It is never easy. It costs a man all he has.

After Christian loses his burden he very soon discovers that he is not alone on the road. He passes three dullards asleep by the wayside, and shortly afterwards is joined by Formalist and Hypocrisy, who tumble over the wall by the side of the way. But at the foot of the Hill they leave him. One is soon lost in the darkness of a wood, and the other is entangled among gloomy mountains, where he falls to rise no more. But Christian pushes on steadily up the Hill.

Half-way up he is met by Timorous and Mis-trust hurrying down with a tale of the lions that guard the Palace on the hill-crest. Christian trembles, but never falters.

'To go back is nothing but death ; to go forward is fear of death and life everlasting beyond it. I will yet go forward.'

All true pilgrims must mount the Hill. We hear of it again in the Story of Christiana and her children. Greatheart points out the by-ways at the bottom of the Hill, and tells the pilgrims that in spite of fences, signposts, and chains, there are still those that will 'choose to adventure here rather than take the pains to go up the Hill.' It is just as well to learn at the very beginning of the Christian life that religion is worthless unless we are willing to take pains.

It is a far cry from John Bunyan to Robert Browning, and yet Browning's deeply interesting poem, 'Easter Day,' teaches the very same lesson, and it has the advantage of doing so in the terms of modern life. Its theme is outlined in the very first lines :

How very hard it is to be
A Christian ! Hard for you and me.

To realize it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the ends of life.

And the trouble of it is that the difficulty is not over and done with.

And the sole thing that I remark
Upon the difficulty, this ;
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race :
As we proceed, it shifts its place,
And where we looked for crowns to fall,
We find the tug's to come—that's all.

Of the difficulties themselves we need not speak. They differ with every age and every individual. The most interesting point is the conclusion. Fascinating as the world may be—and Browning's world was a vastly greater one than Bunyan's, for it contained art, music, and knowledge, 'circling sciences, philosophers, and histories'—all things are unsatisfying unless they lead up to love, the perfect love of God. And the search for that Highest Good presents itself as a sort of sacred pilgrimage :

Thou Love of God ! Or let me die,
Or grant what shall seem heaven almost !
Let me not know that all is lost,
Though lost it be—leave me not tied
To this despair, this corpse-like bride !
Let that old life seem mine—no more—
With limitations as before,
With darkness, hunger, toil, distress ;
Be all the world a wilderness !
Only let me go on, go on,
Still hoping ever and anon
To reach one eve the Better Land.

Then, at the close, there comes in once more the refrain of difficulty, but difficulty

transfigured. It has a meaning, a purpose. The very fact of our encountering it—whether it be in the form of temptation, doubt, or disappointment, shows that we belong to a higher race, that God is leading us on to better things.

And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare ; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.

Thank God, no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said.

It would scarcely be possible to find two men, both Christian thinkers, with such opposite points of view. The Puritan tinker shut out all enjoyments that were not, in his limited sense, purely spiritual; the modern poet, with his cosmopolitan taste, craved satisfaction for every side of man's manifold nature; and yet both agree that there is a Christian life; that its ultimate satisfaction is the Love of God; and that it is an intensely strenuous life; its symbol is the Hill Difficulty.

We have left the Puritan world far behind us. We do not believe that every joy, every pleasure, physical or intellectual, must be surrendered.

That, even now, for some natures, would be the easiest solution. A harder and nobler is to strive after the development of all the powers of the soul, but in the spirit of Watts's motto, 'The Utmost for the Highest.'

There must be self-denial; there must be choice between things that are good in themselves, and the choice of the lower good is in itself a surrender to the baser self. Every man has problems he must decide for himself, and the trouble is that many of them are not capable of a clear-cut solution. 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the things that he alloweth.' But we must not seek a short cut out of our perplexity either by narrowing our life to make it simpler, or by an easy-going indulgence. In either case we shirk the Hill Difficulty. We must 'try, prove, reject, prefer' in the light of the tremendous fact that life is a warfare.

'The love of God in Christ unifies life for us, and shows us the way out of difficulties as they arise, if we are loyal to conscience. As love increases and faith deepens, a man comes to see God everywhere, in the world which is made beautiful and sacred by His presence, in all human love which is a reflection of the divine. Perfect moral health is a state in which self-consciousness is forgotten, and a man desires simply to do God's will. When a heart is motived by the love of God, and a life is inspired

by the consciousness of God's presence, the needful restraint becomes easy. . . . The obligation will always rest on a Christian to give up all that is contrary to the mind of Christ ; but when the heart is filled with love of good it finds no pleasure in evil. It does not mean any narrow deprivation of anything truly human ; for the Christian life is inclusive, subduing all spheres that belong to man.'¹

So Christian toiled up the Hill, sometimes on hands and knees, the first of many difficulties, and at the top he found the lion-guarded gate—and the Palace Beautiful.

¹ *Culture and Restraint*, by Hugh Black, M.A.

VI

THE PALACE BEAUTIFUL

*'All who speak truth to me commissioned are;
All who love God are in my Church embraced,
Not that I have no sense of preference—
None deeper!—but I rather love to draw,
Even here, on earth, on toward the future law
And Heaven's fine etiquette, where "Who?"
and "Whence?"
May not be asked; and, at the Wedding Feast,
North shall sit down with South, and West
with East.'*

BURBIDGE.

*'At every moment of our lives we should be
trying to find out, not in what we differ from
other people, but in what we agree with them.'*

RUSKIN.

VI

THE PALACE BEAUTIFUL

THE House Beautiful was John Bunyan's symbol for the Church.

Bunyan was a man of amazingly broad sympathies. On the lower levels of his mind he accepted the conventional phraseology of his contemporaries, but on the higher he soared into regions far beyond the thought of his age. In a letter written after his first imprisonment he says :

‘ Since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others, I tell you I would be, and hope I am, a CHRISTIAN. . . . And as for those titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Jerusalem, nor Antioch, but rather from Hell or Babylon, for they tend to division.’

The very last time that Bunyan preached—it was in a meeting-house in Whitechapel only

twelve days before he died—he leaned over the pulpit, and said with great earnestness :

‘ Dost thou see a soul that has the image of God in Him ? Love him, love him ! Say, This man and I must go to heaven one day ; serve one another, do good for one another ; and if any wrong you, pray to God to right you, and love the brotherhood.’

From a man who overflowed with affection for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity we do not expect, especially in an allegory, a rigid ecclesiastical theory. And though, in his picture of the Palace Beautiful we may miss some features which seem to us essential to any complete conception, yet he suggests other true notes of the Church which are of the deepest value.

It was the Palace *Beautiful*. Beauty is essential to the idea of the Church. Some would bring into it all the wealth of art, sculpture, and architecture ; would enrich its worship with lovely music and noble song. Others despise and distrust all outward adornments, and would exclude them as far as possible, seeking only the beauty of inward devotion. But beauty, in some sense, there must be. There is nothing saintly in ugliness.

In Holmes’s *Professor at the Breakfast Table*, there is a description of two churches in the city

of Boston. One was the Church of St. Polycarp, a stately artistic structure. Within 'there were pictures, and inscriptions in antiquated character, and there were reading-stands, and flowers on the altar, and other elegant arrangements.' The imagination was touched by 'the sweet alternation of the two choirs, as their holy song floated from side to side—the keen young voices rising like a flight of singing birds that passes from one grove to another, carrying its music with it back and forward.' 'In its mode of worship there was a union of taste and refinement . . . and an air of stateliness, even of pomp.' But it was likewise 'a church with open doors, with seats for all classes and colours alike.'

The other was 'the Church of the Galileans,' 'humbler in outward pretensions,' but likewise 'open to all comers.' 'The stranger that approaches it looks down a quiet street and sees the plainest of chapels—a kind of wooden tent.' Within there were few attractions. 'A small organ at one side and a plain pulpit, showed that the building was a church, but it was a church reduced to its simplest expression.' Its only garniture was to be found week by week in 'the lilies of the field in their season, and the fairest flowers of the year, in due succession, . . . clustered above the preacher's desk.' There were no clerical costumes, no ceremonial forms, no carefully trained choirs. When the good people sang, there was a 'sweet blending of all

voices and all hearts in one common song of praise.'

Holmes found beauty both in the stately church and in the homely meeting, and believed that if worshippers from each of these churches had met by the bedside of a suffering fellow-creature, 'they would have found they had more in common than all the special beliefs or want of beliefs that separated them would amount to.' Our natures differ, and the form of worship that appeals to one is unnecessary to another.

Bunyan was not thinking of buildings, whether cathedrals or meeting-houses, but of the Church as an ideal, out of which all forms will shape themselves. For his own part he loved simplicity in worship, and so far as he had the gathering together of Christians in his mind at all it was in the lowly fashion of Puritan worship ; but it is significant that the one commanding idea suggested by the symbol he employs is that of Beauty.

The world is waiting for the true Beauty of the Church to be revealed. 'Let a Church arise,' said John Pulsford, 'clothed with the Beauty of God, showing forth in herself the sweet Human Majesty of the Lord Jesus, and nations of people will come to her Light, and Kings to the brightness of her rising.'

Entrance into the Church of Christ requires *Courage*. Christian had to face the Lions. True,

they 'were chained, but he saw not the chains.' Bunyan lived in days of persecution, when it cost a man dearly to obey the voice of conscience. Under the Conventicle Act Non-conformists were fined, excommunicated, and imprisoned, and every expedient was tried to destroy Nonconformity altogether. To join the Church, if it were not the Church of England, called for faith and daring of a very high order. But, in a greater or less degree, courage is necessary in every age. To make a definite stand is not easy, and there are many who, like Timorous and Mistrust, fear the lions in the way.

Within the house the great thought is *Fellowship*: fellowship here and now: fellowship with the past: and a joyous fellowship to look forward to in the future.

Christian, as soon as he enters, finds himself welcomed into a family. Friendship is the atmosphere of the place. He is no longer a lonely man, hunted by his sins and jeered at by his neighbours, but a member of a gracious household. All are interested in him, and cheer him by their conversation; and he is tactfully encouraged to tell the story of his own experiences.

This joyous fellowship reaches its climax in the communion of the Holy Supper. They sit down together to a common meal,

'and all their talk at the Table was about the Lord of the Hill: about what He had

done, and wherefore He did what He did, and why He had builded that House: and by what they said I perceived that He had been a great Warrior, and had fought with and slain him that had the power of Death, but not without great danger to Himself, *which made me love Him the more.*'

The scene to Bunyan's mind is so vivid and moving that, in the last sentence, he unconsciously drops into the first person. He identifies himself with Christian.

But this was not all. On the following day Christian is taken into the Library and is shown the Records of the Past. From these he discovers that he is only one of 'a great multitude whom no man can number,' who once suffered as he has suffered, and found deliverance in the same Saviour. And their deeds of valour inspire him with high resolve. His devotion is enriched by the thought of his oneness with the Church of the past.

Then there is a fellowship yet to come. On the last morning he was taken to the top of the House, and away in the sunny south he saw 'a most pleasant Mountainous Country, beautified with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts; flowers also, with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold.' It was Immanuel's land, which after many strivings he would reach. Not the goal itself, but within sight of it. There, too, he

will not be alone, for the Mountains are ‘common to and for all Pilgrims.’ It is a thought, sometimes a little overlooked, of the possibilities of the communion of saints in the closing years of life. ‘From thence,’ he is told, ‘thou mayest see to the Gate of the Celestial City.’

Bunyan was in harmony with the New Testament in making Fellowship the central idea of the Church. Whatever else the Church may mean, this is essential.

When John Wesley was acting as curate to his father at Epworth he was told of a Lincolnshire villager who, even in those dark days, had won respect from his neighbours by reason of his goodness ; and, ready as ever to learn even from the humblest, Wesley visited him. One sentence the old man spoke was never forgotten :

‘Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve Him alone : you must therefore find companions or make them : the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.’

The words went deep, and when the time came for Wesley to make provision for the spiritual needs of the awakened multitudes of the eighteenth century he made Fellowship the very foundation of the Methodist Society.

The place of fellowship is very forcefully

presented by Phillips Brooks in *The Influence of Jesus*:

'Jesus begins with the individual. He always does. His first and deepest touches are on the single soul. Before all social life there is the personal consciousness and its mysterious private relations to the Father from whom it came.'

'But,' he continues, 'THERE ARE SOME THINGS OF THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL CANNOT GET SAVE IN THE COMPANY OF FELLOW-MEN. There are some parts of his own true life always in his brethren's keeping, for which he must go to them. That the individual may find and be his own truest and fullest self, Jesus, his Master, leads him to his fellows.'

Those words go deep down to the philosophy of life, and in days when we are becoming more and more reticent in spiritual things they need to be carefully weighed. We join the Church, not merely for the sake of others, but also for our own sakes, because we, without them, cannot be perfected. The same thought is well expressed by Dr. Hunter in *The Coming Church*:

'The Christian disciple who has only heard the personal call of the Lord has heard but half of His message. "Together in My name," is also a law of His order and way of life. His redeeming work begins

with the single soul, but it does not end there. . . . The tie which relates us to Him also binds us to all His brethren, and gives us a sense of membership in a communion which is beyond all earthly banding and disbanding. In true fellowship with the Son of Man and the Son of God, we are in fellowship with the whole family of God on earth and in heaven.'

Dr. Hunter believes that on the foundation of such fellowship there may be built 'a Church large enough and broad enough to welcome and receive all disciples of Christ.' And he endeavours to describe it. 'A genuine Catholic Church—which in its terms of communion is as comprehensive as the Christian life—must have for its basis of union

'not uniformity of order and ritual,
'not views and opinions,
'not sameness of religious experience,
'but mutual spiritual sympathy, aspiration and purpose—aspiration, not attainment; purpose not character.'

And it will seek to meet and satisfy in and through its services of worship many and varied wants and sympathies and tastes; while its 'message' will be 'as large as the Gospel of Jesus Christ, glad tidings for all people.'

Such a Church may still be a dream, a vision

of things to come. But it is very like the House Beautiful. And if ever it appears on earth we shall say, in phrases familiar in the Apostles' Creed, the Litany, the Te Deum, this is indeed the

Holy Catholic Church.

Thy Holy Church Universal.

The Holy Church throughout the world.

VII

THE VALLEY OF CONFLICT

*'When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something.'*

BROWNING.

*'He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgement blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length*

*To find a stronger faith his own,
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone.'*

TENNYSON, *'In Memoriam.'*

VII

THE VALLEY OF CONFLICT

IN the different stages of the Pilgrim Journey we shall note a rough correspondence with the successive ages of life. Bunyan was a young man when the fight within his soul began, and it is perhaps in youth that such inward conflicts are felt most keenly. At first it is often a lonely struggle. There is no companionship to help us. We have not learned the wholesome truth that others have had to face the same fierce assaults. So Christian went down alone into the Valley of Humiliation, and the greatest fight of his life began.

Old warriors love to fight their battles over again, and when Bunyan described the encounter with Apollyon, he was looking back upon his own early experiences. It is truly a classic contest. One is reminded of the affrays in some of the old Folk Plays where the antagonists bombard one another with all kinds of uncomplimentary epithets as a sort of verbal preparation for the real battle. There is positive zest in the story from the very first moment when

Christian 'espied a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him. His name is Apollyon.'

Apollyon's wordy attack has three stages.

First of all, he claims Christian as his subject. He is from the City of Destruction. 'All that country is mine.'

Secondly, he reminds Christian of all his failures, and the sting of his accusation lies in the fact that it is all perfectly true.

Finally, he declares open hostility. 'I am an enemy to this prince : I hate his person, his laws, his people : I am come out on purpose to withstand thee.'

On this the battle begins in earnest, and Bunyan revels in the description.

'Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way . . . I swear by my Infernal Den here will I spill thy soul.'

And away they go in proper mediaeval fashion, until Christian, almost spent, loses his sword ; but, grasping it again, he gives a deadly thrust, and, finding it tell, 'makes at him again.'

'With that Apollyon spread his dragon's wings and sped him away, and Christian saw him no more.'

'Twas the dreadfulest sight that ever I saw.'

It is doubly interesting to turn from this spirited narrative, which Dean Stanley selected as the subject of one of the three bas-reliefs on the Bunyan Statue at Bedford, to the real Apollyon fight described in *Grace Abounding*. And it will be noted that it occurred *after* what we might fairly describe as his conversion ; *after* he had realized that God and his soul were friends through the blood of the Cross : *after* that consciousness of passionate devotion which led him to say, 'I felt love to Him strong as fire.' The temptation which he described as 'more grievous and dreadful' than any he had yet experienced, took the form of a suggestion 'to sell and part with this most blessed Christ, to exchange Him for the things of this life, for anything.' For days and weeks he was pursued by this miserable idea.

'I could neither eat my food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, or cast my eye to look on this or that, but still the temptation would come, Sell Christ for this, or sell Christ for that ; sell Him, sell Him.'

We can only understand the extraordinary and grotesque forms the suggestion took by remembering that Bunyan was a man of vivid imagination, without question the most imaginative genius of his age.

At last, weary of the struggle, and literally

panting for breath in the intensity of his resistance, the thought framed itself in his heart, 'LET HIM GO IF HE WILL.'

'Now,' says Bunyan, 'was the battle won, and down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great quiet and fearful despair.'

It was at that moment that Bunyan lost his sword. Lost it, but speedily regained it; for, some days later,

'This word took hold on me, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."'

As he walked in the fields this comforted him. It was a great promise. His sin was only like the little stone at his feet as compared 'to the vast and wide field.' It gave him good encouragement for 'two or three hours.' Poor Bunyan! He was indeed sore pressed when the bright intervals were reduced to this.

It is no small tribute to the will power of John Bunyan that he endured this spiritual conflict for over two years. It took all kinds of fantastic forms. Esau got on to his mind—Esau, who sold his birthright, and found 'no place of repentance.' Cain, Solomon, Manasseh, Judas, were among other cheerful characters his soul dwelt upon. Any poor erring mortal that

came into his thoughts caused him measureless suffering, but if, for a moment, he strove to look up to Christ, there was the huge bulk of the enemy straddling all across the road and blocking out the light of day.

Once he consulted an 'ancient Christian,' 'told him all his case,' the whole battle—doubts, fears, imaginations, everything—and ended by telling him that he was 'afraid that' he 'had sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost.' And the ancient man said '*He thought so, too!*' Oh! Apollyon had a mighty ally in this 'ancient Christian,' too blind to recognize beneath the tragic story the fires of a tremendous earnestness. Happily for Bunyan he discovered that the ancient one was a 'stranger to much combat with the devil,' and he took a liberal discount off his judgement.

At length a new thought dawned. What if these dark texts, awful threatenings, and condemning Scriptures were nothing but the shadow of Apollyon himself.

• He stood up and faced them.

One by one he examined them in the light of common sense and discovered to his surprise and comfort that they had no real relevancy to himself.

God guided him to the conviction that he had not sinned unpardonably, that he neither despised nor rejected salvation, but longed for it with his whole heart.

The thought of 'righteousness through Christ' filled him with new hope, and with this weapon he thrust once and again at the enemy, until at last he spread his great wings and 'sped him away.'

Then came a time of great joy.

'O methought Christ ! Christ ! there was nothing but Christ that was before all my eyes. . . . Twas glorious to me to see His Exaltation, and the Worth and Prevalency of all His Benefits, and that because now I could look from myself to Him, and should reckon that all those graces of God that now were green upon me, were yet but like those crack-groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when their Gold is in their Trunks at home ! Oh ! I saw that my Gold was in my Trunk at home ! In Christ, my Lord and Saviour ! Now Christ was all : all my Wisdom, all my Righteousness, all my Sanctification, all my Redemption.'

Even the Apollyon fight was not the end of Christian's troubles. After the Valley of Humiliation came the Valley of the Shadow of Death, with its hobgoblins, satyrs, and fiends ; its perilous path between ditch and quagmire ; its darkness that could be felt. Among these grotesque terrors there is one touch of thrilling actuality where 'one of the wicked ones got

behind him, and stept up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, *which he verily thought had proceeded out of his own mind.*'

It is interesting to know that this second conflict had a distinct parallel in John Bunyan's experience. He too, went down into the Valley of the Shadow. He was threatened with consumption, and thought he was going to die; and in this time of physical weakness temptation gripped him once more. There came into his mind 'an innumerable company' of his 'sins and transgressions.' His soul fell into darkness.

'Now was my soul greatly pinched between these two considerations, *Live I must not, Die I dare not.* Now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was giving up all for lost.'

It is unnecessary to dwell in further detail on this experience. Bunyan was sorely beset for a time, but he came out once more into the sunlight, and, though he had many another conflict, none appear to have been quite as keen as these which marked the early stages of his Christian life.

Bunyan was still a young man when he passed through this severe testing, and there are reasons why such struggles are particularly intense in youth. When we first set out on pilgrimage our

knowledge of ourselves and of the human heart is very limited. Sleeping instincts awake and take us by surprise. Thoughts we never thought before, tendencies from which we deemed ourselves immune, reveal possibilities of evil which startle and appal us. We hardly dare take others into confidence for fear we should not be understood. Often much trouble of soul is caused by ignoring the distinction between temptation and sin.

In one of the most remarkable passages in *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan tells us what he 'gained by this temptation.' It was by no means loss. There are precious things won in conflict that can be obtained in no other way. The first of these was that he 'was made continually to possess in his soul a very wonderful sense both of the Being and Glory of God, and of His beloved Son.' 'Even though for a time it was a revelation of dread and terror,' yet it was a gain. It was better to be in the blaze of a light which searched him through and through than to be left in outer darkness. 'The Scriptures also were wonderful things' to him, and he was 'made to see more into the nature of the Promises than ever before.' He began to understand their infinite worth. 'A word, a word to lean a weary soul upon, that I might not sink for ever, it was that I hunted for.' And so it came to pass that when he came out of the dark Valley and saw God's face in love, he found himself in possession

of a wealth of comfort every bit of which he owed to the very strenuousness of the fight.

It is a mistake for Christians to put down all their conflicts to the Evil One. Our Lord was tempted of the devil, but when He spoke to His disciples of the evils that defile a man He cautioned them that they proceed 'out of the heart.' Our worst enemy is self.

At the same time it is impossible to ignore the fact that there are unseen Powers, hostile to God, against which the Christian must do warfare. We cannot regard Christ's words to Peter as merely figurative when He said, 'Satan hath asked to have you that he may sift you as wheat.' Mysterious it may be, but to those who have much knowledge of the human soul, it is certain that there are invisible enemies to contend with; and in studying the Apollyon fight it may be well to remember the significant words of St. Paul :

' Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.'

VIII

COMRADESHIP BY THE WAY

'Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them.'

W. MORRIS, '*A Dream of John Ball.*'

'True, active, productive friendship consists in keeping equal pace in life, in the approval of my aims by my friend, while I approve his, and thus moving forwards together steadily, however much our way of thought and life may vary.'

GOETHE.

'We want one or two companions of intelligence, probity, and grace, to wear out life with; persons by whom we can measure ourselves, and who shall hold us fast to good sense and virtue.'

EMERSON.

VIII

COMRADESHIP BY THE WAY

WHEN Christian was little more than half-way through the darkness of the Valley, he heard the voice of one in front of him, ‘ Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.’ For the first time he realized that he was not alone. There were others on the same road, and the thought gave him great encouragement.

Not long after daybreak he saw Faithful in front of him, and hailed him from a distance. But Faithful, who passed by the Palace Beautiful while Christian was being shown its treasures, refused to stop, and the scene that follows has a very human touch about it.

‘ At this Christian was somewhat moved, and putting to all his strength, he quickly got up with Faithful, and did so over-run him, so the last was first. Then did Christian vain-gloriously smile, because he had gotten the start of his brother : but not taking heed to his feet, he suddenly stumbled and fell, and could not rise again, until Faithful came up to help him.

' Then I saw in my Dream they went very lovingly on together ; and had sweet discourse of all things that happened to them in their pilgrimage.'

The two became fast friends, and journeyed together as far as Vanity Fair, where Faithful died as a martyr for the faith. After leaving the town, Hopeful, whose whole life was changed by the martyr's constancy, ' joined himself ' to Christian. ' Thus one died to make Testimony to the Truth, and another rises out of his ashes to be a companion to Christian.'

Bunyan makes much of companionship as one of the essentials of a healthy Christian life, and the characters of the three men are drawn in very great detail. And over against the true we have the false pilgrims, Talkative and By-ends, who are described with no little insight and humour. All four men are worth study as types.

Faithful is a man of strong, impulsive temperament. No half measures will satisfy him. He must be out and out, one thing or the other. Christian is harassed by doubts, fears, and misgivings. The mind plays a great part in his conversion. He reasons everything out, and gets himself into sad entanglements at times. He was Bunyan all over. He took nothing for granted. But on the other hand intellectual difficulties never troubled Faithful, and though travelling the same road his experiences are altogether different. He missed the Slough of

Despond altogether. He never met Worldly Wiseman and was unaware of the existence of such a distinguished surgeon as Legality. He somehow missed the House of the Interpreter, and as he approached the Palace Beautiful the lions were fast asleep. Apollyon, a very rationalistic fiend, never interfered with him, and passing through the two dread Valleys he had sunshine all the way. Such a type of man is the despair of many Christians. They envy his serene confidence, his unquestioning disposition, his clear bright assurance.

Yet he had temptations to which Christian was altogether a stranger. Instead of Worldly Wiseman he met Madame Wanton, and though he refused to have anything to do with her, the appeal to his lower nature was so strong that he said, 'I know not whether I did wholly escape her or no.' At the foot of the Hill Difficulty he was accosted by the Old Adam, who besought him to go back with him to the Town of Deceit, promised dainties and pleasures, and his daughter to wife. Only just in time did he see written across the old man's brow, 'Put off the old man with his deeds.' To yield meant slavery, and yet, though he resisted, it was a struggle. The temptation gripped him.

'Just as I turned away I felt him take hold of my flesh, and give me such a deadly twitch back, that I thought he had pulled part of me after himself.'

In the Valley of Humiliation he encountered no dragon-like fiend, but he made the acquaintance of Discontent, who told him that 'the Valley was altogether without honour'; and he had no little difficulty in shaking off Shame, a most pertinacious adversary.

'He objected against Religion itself; he said it was ■ pitiful low sneaking business for a man to mind religion, . . . a tender conscience was an unmanly thing. . . . It was a shame to sit whining and mourning under a sermon, and a shame to come sighing and groaning home. It was a shame to ask my neighbour forgiveness for petty faults, or to make restitution where I had taken from any.'

We know that gentleman. He has plenty of spokesmen to-day in office and workshop, and he is responsible for many a religious failure. The trouble with Shame was to get rid of him. He haunted Faithful, whispering in his ear, trying his utmost to turn him back.

In all ages there have been men keenly alive to the temptations that assailed Faithful. In the early days of Christianity men sought to overcome them by asceticism. There was Benedict, the boy saint, who rolled himself on thorns to subdue the passions of the flesh. There was Antony the Hermit, who ran away from the world, and found it still with him in his desert

cell. Jerome describes in graphic words the ascetics of the Syrian wilderness, some living in communities, others wandering in lonely wastes tenanted by serpents and scorpions, all trying to subdue the body. Yet asceticism was a failure. Jerome wrote to his friend Eustochium:

‘Oh how often, set in the desert, and that vast solitude which, burnt by the fierce rays of the sun, afforded to monks a horrid dwelling-place, did I think that I was among the delights of Rome! . . . The depths of valleys, the steeps of mountains, the precipices of rocks—were the slave-prison of my most wretched flesh.’

Hunger, penance, sackcloth, stripes, could do nothing to extinguish the fires within.

Faithful found a more excellent way. His bright sunny conquest of himself was won through his love for Christ.

Bunyan’s portrait of Faithful is valuable. He reminds us that loyal-hearted, pure-minded men may be sorely beset by the temptations of the flesh. He shows that the lower nature may be so strong that religion may mean a veritable crucifying of the self; and yet a man may be more than conqueror through Him who hath loved us. And he goes even further, as we shall see, and affirms that it is just of such men that martyrs are made. Faithful was capable of a

mighty affection ; and while evidenced in his close friendship with Christian and the unflinching loyalty to Christ displayed in the discussion with Talkative, it received its highest attestation in the fact that he was true till death.

Christian, on leaving Vanity Fair, was not left without companionship.

‘ I saw in my Dream that Christian went not forth alone, for there was one whose name was Hopeful . . . who joined himself unto him, and, entering into a brotherly covenant, told him he would be his companion.’

Hopeful was a bright, cheery, good-hearted fellow, moved by love much more than by reason. He is a type of many who are far more likely to become Christians as a result of what they see Christianity to be in the lives of others than by any abstract discussion.

He was not clever. Christian is by far the abler man of the two. When they came to the monument of Lot’s wife, Hopeful caught sight of it and recognized the form of a woman, but it was Christian who read the inscription which was written in a strange language. It was evidently Bunyan’s intention to include among his pilgrim types a man who was simple and unlearned. ‘ To this man will I look, . . . he that is of a humble and contrite spirit and that trembleth at My word.’

Nor was Hopeful built in heroic mould. When he heard from Christian the story of Little-faith and the three rogues, and of how he allowed himself to be robbed without a struggle, Hopeful remarked, 'He might, methinks, have stood one brush with them.' At which Christian somewhat sharply replied, 'Since this is the height of thy stomach now, they might put thee to second thoughts.' This is not the only occasion on which Christian gave his companion a setting-down. Bunyan adds in one place a quaint marginal note, 'Christian *snibbeth* his fellow for ill-advised speaking.' Only a very good-natured fellow would have stood being compared to 'birds of the brisker sort who will run to and fro in trodden paths with the shell upon their heads.' Yet he had great capacity of devotion, and he was absolutely sincere when he said :

'Had I now a thousand gallons of blood
in my body I could spill it all for the sake
of the Lord Jesus.'

These two, Faithful and Hopeful, were Christian's companions, but it is important to note that they were his *chosen* companions. There were others on the road eager for his company—false pilgrims—and the most interesting of these are Talkative and By-ends. Bunyan shows both insight and humour in their portraiture.

Talkative joined Christian and Faithful soon after they had made each other's acquaintance. He was a stranger to Faithful, who at first was completely taken in and thought him a very fine fellow. His appearance was deceptive. 'He was a tall man, and something more comely at a distance than near at hand.' As for his talk, it was enough to carry a dozen pilgrims off their feet. It was nothing else but talk, talk, talk, glib, shallow, and meaningless. When Faithful tried to tie him down to a definite subject with the question, 'What one thing shall we found our discourse upon?' he replied :

' What you will : I will talk of things heavenly or things earthly : things moral or things evangelical : things sacred or things profane : things past or things to come : things foreign or things at home : things more essential or things circumstantial : provided that all be done to our profit.'

Christian recognizes him, and, taking Faithful aside, tells him who he is. He comes from the same town, 'the son of one Saywell, who dwelt in Prating Row.' His character is notorious.

' This man is for any company and for any talk . . . Religion hath no place in his heart or house or conversation : all he hath lieth in his tongue, and his religion is

to make a noise therewith. His house is empty of religion as the white of an egg is of savour.'

Faithful soon discovers this to be correct, when, in their second conversation, he asks Talkative for some sign of the grace of God in the heart. He is ready enough with a reply.

'A very good question. . . . Where the grace of God is in the heart it causeth there a great outcry against sin.'

'Rather,' says Faithful, 'it inclineth the soul to abhor its sin.'

While Talkative, as a type, has no actual parallel in real life, yet there is a good deal of him in many everyday people who profess to be Christians.

There is always the danger *lest our conversation should take its colour from our surroundings*. Some well-meaning people are conversational chameleons. They have no deep convictions. They talk like saints in the company of Christians. Even Talkative was not altogether a conscious hypocrite. He really thought himself sincere for the moment when he said,

'I like you wonderful well. What thing so pleasant and what so profitable as to talk of the things of God?'

But, unfortunately, when the atmosphere changed, he changed with it.

'As he talketh now with you, so will he talk when he is on the ale-bench.'

We are not always in the same company. If we were continually among people of kindred ideas it would be easy to be consistent. But at business, in social life, in casual ways we come in contact with those who do not think as we think, who have other ideals, who perhaps are hostile to religion. It is easy to catch the tone of our company. The wish to please, the unwillingness to be singular, the fear of a sneer may lead men to talk as others talk, to be unfaithful in word. An old proverb says, 'Better a bridle on the tongue than a lash upon the conscience.'

There is a further peril *lest our words should be bigger than our deeds.*

It is easier to talk about goodness than to *be* good. There may even be a delicate enjoyment in talking about religion, and yet the only result a momentary glow that ends in nothing. Bunyan knew the danger. He was a good talker, and he was dreadfully afraid lest Paul's words should apply to him: 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.'

‘ What, thought I, shall I be proud because I am a sounding Brass ? Is it so much to be a Fiddle ? Hath not the least creature that hath life, more of God in it than these ? ’

We may sum up the Christian philosophy of speech in Newman’s noble stanzas :

Prune thou thy words, the thoughts control
 That o’er thee swell and throng,
 They will condense within thy soul,
 And change to purpose strong.

But he who lets his feelings run
 In soft luxurious flow,
 Shrinks when hard service must be done,
 And faints at every woe.

Faith’s meanest deed more favour bears,
 Where hearts and wills are weighed,
 Than brightest transports, choicest prayers,
 Which bloom their hour and fade.

By-ends is a pilgrim of quite a different type. His name is significant. An old word, once in common use, it is formed on the same principle as by-path, by-stander, by-lane, and others such as by-room, by-art, and by-corner which have gone completely out of use. Just as a by-path is not the highway but a side-lane, or as by-stander is not one of the chief actors in a scene but a looker-on, so a by-end is not the chief end but a side-issue. By-ends, therefore, is a man on

pilgrimage, not for the great end of religion, but for lesser ends of his own. He is religious because he finds it profitable—a fair-weather Christian.

Christian and Hopeful overtook him not far from Vanity Fair. He announced that he came from the town of Fairspeech, but declined to tell his name. This seemed a little suspicious, and Christian rather presses the point.

‘ Pray, sir, what may I call you ? ’

‘ I am a stranger to you,’ replied By-ends, ‘ and you to me : if you be going this way I shall be glad of your company : if not I must be content.’

If a man is consciously insincere he is never proud of the fact, and does his best to conceal it. Very soon, however, By-ends gives himself away. His description of his ancestry and aristocratic connexions is a delightful bit of humour. He boasts that he is related to everybody who is anybody in the town of Fairspeech.

‘ Almost the whole town, and in particular my Lord Turnabout, my Lord Fairspeech (from whose ancestors the town took its name) and my Lord Timeserver. Also Mr. Smoothman, Mr. Facing-both-Ways, Mr. Anything : and the parson of our Parish, Mr. Twotongues, was my mother’s own brother, by father’s side : And to tell you

the truth I am a Gentleman of good quality : yet my Great Grandfather was but a Waterman, looking one way and rowing another : and I got most of my estate by the same occupation.'

His wife is as well connected as himself.

' A virtuous woman, my Lady Faining's daughter, and she is arrived at such a pitch of breeding that she knows how to carry it to all, even to prince or peasant.'

It is dangerous to talk so much about your ancestry if you do not want to be recognized, and it suddenly dawns upon Christian who he is. But he repudiates the name of By-ends. It is 'only a nickname given by those who cannot abide me.'

But surely there must be some reason for it ?

' Never, never ! the worst that ever I did . . . was that I had always the luck to jump in my judgement with the present way of the times, whatever it was, and my chance was to get thereby.'

He frankly acknowledges that his two working principles are, firstly, never to strive against wind and tide, and secondly, to be ever most zealous when Religion goes in his silver slippers. Christian and Hopeful promptly shake him off,

and he joins three kindred spirits called Money-love, Save-all, and Hold-the-World. To them he expounds his views more at length, contrasting them with what he regards as the narrow opinions of the two pilgrims from whom he has just parted.

'They, after their headstrong manner, conclude that it is duty to rush on their journey *all* weathers : and I am for waiting for Wind and Tide. They are for hazarding all for God at a clap : and I am for taking *all* advantages to secure my life and estate. They are for holding their notions though all other men are against them : but I am for Religion in what, and so far as, the times and my safety will bear it. They are for Religion when in rags and contempt : but I am for him when he walks in his Golden Slippers in the sunshine and with applause.'

A most ingenuous confession. There is a species of honesty about his hypocrisy which one does not find in real life.

Nevertheless, By-ends is a mirror in which many people who would intensely resent the accusation of insincerity may see themselves as they really are. There are those who outwardly conform to the world and endeavour to persuade themselves that inwardly they are Christians. Such a character develops by imperceptible changes. When the lesser ends of

life become too absorbing we are in danger; for if a choice has to be made suddenly religion may go to the wall. Bunyan is never tired of insisting that a man's only safety is in being out-and-out.

Some may be inclined to criticize these portraits and say, 'We never meet such men.' Possibly not. In everyday life, and especially in our own day when there is so much diffused Christianity—the value of which is not to be too lightly estimated—characters do not stand out so clearly as in Bunyan's pages. And, further, reticence and reserve have become so characteristic of the majority of people that it is not easy to sift the true from the false, certainly not as easy as in Bunyan's day where there were no half-shades or semitones in religion, and when a man had to take a decided stand on one side or the other. It is also to be remembered that human nature is very complex. You may find By-ends in Christian himself; and something of Talkative in a man predominantly 'Faithful.'

It is not for us to judge one another, but to be honest with our own hearts, and to use Christian comradeship as a means of fostering what is worthy and noble both in ourselves and others.

IX

THE WORLD'S FAIR

*'Give us—amid earth's weary moil
And wealth, for whic' men cark and care,
'Mid fortune's pride, and need's wild toil,
And broken hearts in purple rare,—*

*'Give us Thy Grace to rise above
The glare of this World's smelting fires!
Let God's great love put out the love
Of gold and gain and low desires!*

*'Still, sweetly rings the Gospel strain
Of golden store that knows not rust:
The love of Christ is more than gain,
And heavenly crowns than yellow dust.'*

C. F. ALEXANDER.

IX

THE WORLD'S FAIR

HITHERTO Christian's new life has been a personal thing, or a treasure shared with those like-minded with himself ; but the Pilgrim Road now takes him through the busy haunts of men, and he must face the test of the open world. We are not meant to be hermits or anchorites. Our religion must be robust enough to stand the wear and tear of everyday life. A man who resolves to live for God has to reckon with the fact that he will meet, day by day, with a great deal that is hostile to Christianity ; and Vanity Fair is Bunyan's way of picturing the Christian, still in the early stages of his spiritual experience, in contact with this hostile element. It is the world, with all its temptations ; not the world of nature or of men, but that world, often very real to us, the very atmosphere of which is unfriendly to religion, a tendency and an influence which may creep into our homes, meet us at our work, and may sometimes take possession of whole communities.

Bunyan's colours are borrowed from the social life of his own day. Drop the allegory and

you have a realistic picture of the Fairs of the seventeenth century. There was one held annually at Sturbridge, near Cambridge, with which Bunyan was no doubt familiar, that reached the dimensions of a small town. It had streets and rows named according to the goods sold—Bookseller's Row, Cook Row, Garlick Row. Every commodity had its quarter. There was the Cheese Fair, the Wool Fair, and the Hop Fair. Taverns and eating-houses provided for the wants of the merchants, and all kinds of shows and entertainments attracted the crowds who came from far and near to buy, or see the sights. A description of one of these fairs, published in 1641, gives a graphic idea of the rough gaiety of the scene :

‘ Here a knave in a fool’s coat with a trumpet sounding, or a drum beating, invites you to see his puppets : there is a rogue like a wild woodman, or in antic shape like an incubus, desires your company to see his show ; on the other side Hocus Pocus, with three yards of tape in his hand showing the art of legerdemain to the admiration and astonishment of his company. Amongst these you shall find a grey Goose cap, as wise as the rest, with a whatdyelack in his mouth stand in his booth shaking a rattle or scraping a fiddle—and all these together make such a distracted noise, that you would think Babel not comparable to it.’

The Fairs had their own legal machinery. In each there was a court of summary justice known as the Piepowder Court, a term corrupted from *Pieds poudreuse*, or 'Dusty Feet,' the old popular nickname given to the merchants and pedlars. Ben Jonson once sat as judge in such a court at Smithfield. At Sturbridge the mayor or his deputy presided. Against the decisions of this tribunal there was no appeal.

Among scenes such as these, Christian and Faithful suddenly find themselves, and the appearance of the two harmless pilgrims throws the whole Fair into commotion. The reasons given for the disturbance are three :

Their raiment was diverse from the raiment of any that traded at the Fair ;

Their speech was strange to the people of the Fair ;

They set very light by the wares of the Fair.

In Bunyan's quaint phrase they were looked upon as 'outlandish men,' and the realism of the picture is strengthened by the fact that, less than a century ago, there were villages in England where a stranger would be shouted after as a 'foreigner,' and greeted as such with a volley of stones.

The pilgrims were different from others in dress, speech, and manners. So were the Puritans, and the outward characteristics were the marks of a spirit entirely opposed to that of the age in which they lived.

The trial of Christian and Faithful is a satire upon the sorry justice meted out to worthy men in the seventeenth century.

'Then were they brought forth in order to their condemnation.'

The case was prejudged, and there were many such travesties of justice in Bunyan's day. One is reminded of a still earlier reign when Thomas Cromwell, minister to Henry VIII, issued an order 'for the trial *and execution* of the Abbot of Glastonbury.'

The whole procedure is intended to have only one end. The witnesses give evidence to order. The chief of them, Pickthank, by his name a professional flatterer, shows a most obliging spirit.

'My Lord, I could say much more, but I would not be tedious unto the Court. Yet, if need be, when the other gentlemen have given in their evidence, rather than anything shall be wanting that shall dispatch him, I will enlarge my Testimony against him.'

The description of the jury is characterized by no little humour ; and the judge is fully worthy of the bench that could produce a Jeffery. In fact the judge's abusive address is most closely paralleled by Judge Jeffery's tirades against Algernon Sidney and Richard Baxter. Bunyan

was painting from the life. And so the trial ended as it was meant to end. Faithful was condemned to die, and after many sufferings 'was carried up through the clouds . . . the nearest way to the Celestial Gate.'

Thus Bunyan, in his varied gallery of portraits, finds a place of honour for the martyr. Every age has seen such acts of heroism from the first century down to the twentieth. They are freshly inscribed in the Christian records of China and Korea, and the inscriptions which tell of the faithfulness of the early Church have not yet faded from the walls of the Catacombs of Rome.

Remember what a martyr said
On the rude tablet overhead :
' I was born sickly, poor and mean,
A slave : no misery could screen
The holders of the pearl of price
From Caesar's envy : therefore twice
I fought with beasts, and three times saw
My children suffer by his law ;
At last my own release was earned :
I was some time in being burned,
But at the close a Hand came through
The fire above my head, and drew
My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
Sergius, a brother, writes for me
This testimony on the wall—
For me, I have forgot it all.'

And now it is necessary to inquire more in detail what Bunyan meant by Vanity Fair.

It is the world regarded as hostile to Christianity. ‘The way to the Celestial City lies *just through this town.*’ There is no evading it. ‘He that will go to the City, and yet not go through the Town, must needs go out of the world.’ Nor is it a peril of one age only. ‘The Fair is an ancient thing, of long standing.’

We have also to take into account that it changes in character. When Christiana and her children went through they were told that in some parts of the Fair religion was even honourable. Things were totally changed, and though the good people were few they were not interfered with.

The term ‘world’ is used in four different senses in the New Testament :

(1) It may mean the universe, the ordered creation, as when Jesus prayed, ‘Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.’

(2) It may signify simply the earth, our dwelling-place, rich in beauty, crowded with interest, beset with mystery ; and though its wonder and glory must not absorb us to the exclusion of higher things, we may honestly delight in it, and find it to be in truth a transparency through which the light of the great Creator may shine upon our souls.

(3) It is sometimes equivalent to humanity, the world of men, as in the words of John, interpretative of the Saviour’s purpose, ‘God so loved the world.’

(4) But there is another more subtle meaning suggested by John's great words in his First Epistle (I use Dr. Weymouth's lucid translation):

' Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any one loves the world there is no love in his heart for the Father. For the things in the world—the cravings of the earthly nature, the cravings of the eyes, the show and pride of life—they all come, not from the Father, but from the world. And the world, with its cravings, is passing away: but he that does God's will continues for ever.'

It is plain that what John means is not the universe, or the earth we live in, or our fellow-men, but a spirit, a temper, an attitude. It has nothing to do with business, pleasure, or money *in themselves*, but with the way in which we regard them. The world we live in may be a Vanity Fair, in which a man's whole thought is of earthly and selfish gain; or it may be a City of God, in which there is scope for the finest qualities of a man's nature. Worldliness is essentially materialism, treating the world as an end in itself; the Christian spirit makes God supreme, and His will the touchstone of character.

The Puritans—and Bunyan, in his description of Vanity Fair, was definitely Puritan—made none of these distinctions. The world

around them was so corrupt that they condemned it indiscriminately. Their attitude towards it was that of St. Bernard in the very first lines of his *De Contemptu Mundi* :

The world is very evil,
The times are growing late,
Be sober and keep vigil,
The judge is at the gate.

In their view a man who professed to be a Christian could no longer take pleasure in the pursuits of an earthly life. They found no entralling delight in nature ; beauty was a snare ; art, poetry, and music were full of subtle temptations. They were indifferent to the growth of earthly knowledge. None of the distinguished scientific men of the seventeenth century were Puritans, though some of them were very devout Christians. There were exceptions, notably, in the realms of literature, John Milton ; but, taking the Puritans as a whole, this was their characteristic tone.

The danger of this wholesale condemnation is that it fosters the spirit which George Eliot satirized as ‘other-worldliness.’ If a man becomes wholly wrapt up in the thought of his own personal salvation the inevitable tendency is to selfishness. A far nobler ideal is expressed in the words ‘saved, to serve’ ; but, much as we may learn from the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, that is not one of the lessons it teaches us.

Happily for us a larger view is possible. Life is not an easy thing for most of us. We have to buy and sell ; work for ourselves and others, keenly, intelligently, strenuously ; take our share in life's struggles and find what rest and recreation we can by the way ; but, if we are the pilgrims of the unseen, we shall know that the world is God's world, and we may discover Him at every point. Dr. Dale said in a very powerful chapter in *Laws of Christ for Common Life* :

' It is mere ennui or a morbid form of the religious life which induces a man to turn away with disgust from the pleasant things of this world. There is a worldliness which is Christian, and a distaste for the world which is very un-Christian. With a healthy body and a healthy faith in God, eye and ear will find a thousand delights. The morning light will be beautiful, and the perfume of flowers and the songs of birds. The verses of poets will have an infinite charm ; and the voices of noble singers and the pictures of great artists will be to us among the dear gifts of God—dear for their own sakes and dear for the sake of Him from whom they came. We shall value the wisdom of ancient centuries, and shall watch with keen and sympathetic excitement the brilliant intellectual achievements of our own times. We shall be thankful if we are able to visit famous cities, and the rivers and mountains of remote lands ; we shall

be still more thankful for the dearer joys of home. The music of our children's voices will be sweet to us, and the light in the eyes we love.'

Yet we shall not forget the need of watching against the real spirit of worldliness. If the world becomes opaque ; if we look at it, and not through it ; if we have no windows towards the eternal dawn ; if we live for the present only without the wonder and hope inspired by faith in the unseen,—then all the evils that Bunyan feared will become possible, and the world will become a mere Vanity Fair, a place of getting and spending, of pleasure-seeking and transitory gain.

X

THE PERILS OF THE ONWARD ROAD

'It is astonishing how soon the whole conscience begins to unravel, if a single stitch is dropped.'

CHAS. BUXTON, 'Notes of Thought.'

'Keep the faculty of effort alive in thee by a little gratuitous exercise every day; do every day or two something for no other reason than that thou wouldest rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draw nigh, it may find thee not unnerved and untrained to stand the test.'

WM. JAMES, 'Principles of Psychology.'

'Holy zeal is not ■ sudden flash, but a constant resolution of the soul; like the natural heat and not like a fever; therefore it concocteth and strengtheneth, when false zeal only vexeth and consumeth.'

RICHARD BAXTER.

X

THE PERILS OF THE ONWARD ROAD

As we travel along the Pilgrim Road the scenery changes, and the dangers of the road assume new and unexpected forms. Every age of life has its own peculiar temptations, and no sooner do we imagine that we have conquered our foes than new ones present themselves. The experiences of the two pilgrims, new friends and pledged companions, after they leave Vanity Fair seem intended by Bunyan to illustrate the perils of middle life.

What are the most dangerous years of life ? Most people would instinctively say the years of youth. True, the young are handicapped by inexperience. They are more easily carried away by impulse and wilfulness. Mistakes made at the start may have consequences that can never be annulled. And yet there is much to be said for the theory that the middle years of life are the most dangerous of all. Temptation becomes more subtle and insinuating. It steals upon the soul unawares and takes strange and unexpected forms ; and, if yielded to, it is more difficult to recover lost ground.

Bunyan analyses with great skill two of the temptations which are most to be feared when a man is no longer young. One is the love of Money, and the other the shrinking from Hardship.

The first is symbolized by ‘Demas, gentleman-like.’ The adjective has a touch of genius about it. The man of the world, and especially the speculator, loves to pose as a gentleman.

When Vanity Fair was left behind, Christian and Hopeful came, shortly after their encounter with By-ends, to a little plain called Ease. It was pleasant enough, but all too quickly crossed, for, as Bunyan says rather sententiously, ‘the ease that pilgrims have is but little in this life.’

On the other side they reached a hill where there was a silver mine—a dangerous spot, for the ground was treacherous, and many drawing near to see had fallen into the pit and lost their lives. Here stood Demas, inviting passers-by to come and seek their fortunes. Hopeful, never very shrewd in his judgement of character, was inclined to go; but Christian sturdily refused. He was not to be turned out of the way, however tempting the hope of gain. Demas did his utmost to persuade them, assuring them that ‘he was one of their fraternity, and if they would tarry a little he also himself would walk with them.’ Then Christian—illustrating Bunyan’s quaint marginal phrase—‘Christian roundeth up Demas’—pours forth a wealth of Puritanical

invective which must have surprised the 'gentlemanlike' custodian of the mine.

'I know you. Gehazi was your great-grandfather, and Judas your father, and you have trod their steps. It is but a devilish prank thou usest. Thy father was hanged for a traitor, and thou deservest no better reward.'

As they went on their way By-ends and his three friends—Money-love, Save-all, and Hold-the-world, came in sight, and 'at the first beck went over to Demas.' They were never seen again in the road to the Celestial City.

A little farther on the pilgrims passed an old stone monument of which Christian deciphers the inscription. It was Lot's wife, and as they understood it, a warning against covetousness.

It is a curious fact that while the Puritans of the seventeenth century were severe in their condemnation of amusements they had comparatively little to say about money-getting. Possibly the coarse and vicious pleasures of the day were, for that period, the greater evil of the two; but it is noticeable that Puritanism in its more modern forms has kept the relative emphasis much the same. In our own time there are not a few who denounce in unmeasured terms the recreations for which they have no personal inclination, and yet give themselves to the business of money-

making with an absorbing zeal which is occasionally tainted by very questionable methods.

Bunyan is an exception to the general rule. He knew that Demas could ensnare the soul as surely as Madame Wanton. Souls are lost on the Hill Lucre as disastrously as in Vanity Fair. Paul is sometimes made responsible for the statement that 'money is the root of all evil.' What he really said was that 'the *love* of money is a root of all kinds of evil,' a truth illustrated in a thousand ways in the world around us. Money is a good servant but a bad master ; and we shall go far to escape its tyranny if we act on the principle Paul adopted for himself, ' We take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.'

The perils associated with money grow more insistent as life advances. Responsibility increases. The necessity of making a livelihood, not only for oneself, but for others dependent on us, imposes a perpetual burden on tens of thousands ; and the temptation to compromise with conscience in the methods of getting money are not easy to overcome. For those who prosper, the excitement of pushing ahead, the seductiveness of 'get rich quick' theories, and the curious instinct expressed in the saying, 'much would have more,' lead in many instances to a lessening of interest in spiritual things, and sometimes to the abandonment of the Pilgrim Road altogether.

Another danger arises from the disinclination to endure hardship ; and this is suggested by the episode of Bypath Meadow.

It is important to note that it immediately follows a period of quiet and refreshment. The pilgrims, after a while, reached a pleasant land by a river—the River of Life. Never since he first started had Christian enjoyed so peaceful an experience. It was a time of sunshine, warmth, and safety ; no foes to assail, no Apollyon, no false pilgrims to annoy. But, as often happens in real life, the very next stretch of the road was hard, stony, and steep, and they were filled with discouragement. Why should they have this discomfort ? Surely after all their conflicts they might expect some relaxation of the strain ! Just at this point they noticed at the side of the road a pleasant meadow, and a most inviting stile. Christian went to the stile to see. On the other side of the hedge there lay an easy path parallel with the rugged track along which they were toiling. It was too tempting. ‘ This,’ said Christian, ‘ is the easiest going : come, good Hopeful, let us get over.’ And over they went.

How perfectly true to life !

Bypath Meadow may always be known by the fact that it looks *easier than the right way*. We are in danger when we choose the pleasant path in preference to one which means hardship and self-denial ; when we adopt as our aim Ease rather than Duty.

It always appears to *run alongside the sure path*. But, be it noted, it is unmistakably on the other side of the hedge. There is no getting into it without some pricks of conscience.

It inevitably *leads to Doubting Castle and Giant Despair*; and there is no more subtle psychological study in the *Pilgrim's Progress* than in Bunyan's description of the experience of Christian and Hopeful at this stage of their journey.

The kind of doubt which Bunyan had in his mind when he pictured in his allegory the strong walls, massive gates, and gloomy dungeon of Doubting Castle has nothing in common with what we understand by honest intellectual doubt. Doubt in such a sense is not sinful. It may even be a necessary, though painful, stage in the soul's development. Doubt has been described as the 'mother of progress,' and the questionings of brave, sincere spirits for whom nothing but the truth would suffice has never destroyed faith, but has led to higher and more intelligent faith. The strong man is he

Who fought his doubts and gathered strength,
who

faced the spectres of the mind and laid them.

There is profound truth in the great lines in Bishop Blougram's 'Apology':

What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head doubts, heart doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends

Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul,
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show.

No, the abyss of doubt into which the two pilgrims were flung as a result of their leaving the straight path was *the doubt which springs from unfaithfulness*. Such an experience as Bunyan describes is, of course, possible at almost any stage of the Christian life: but it is most common when the freshness of youth has passed, when the strain and stress of life begin to tell, when the soul grows weary and we are tempted to take the easy rather than the strenuous path.

The description of the pilgrims in prison is soul-searching in its minute detail. It is a Diary of Despair, and it is written with the fullness of a journal—four days and a night of acute misery.

On Tuesday evening they go astray, are overtaken by the storm, are nearly drowned, and spend the night in the open.

On Wednesday they are captured by the Giant and flung into the dungeon.

On Thursday, advised by his wife, Giant Despair beats them with his crabtree cudgel, and leaves them all aches and bruises.

On Friday, also on his wife's suggestion, he advises them to put an end to themselves, and they sadly deliberate whether to do so or not.

On Saturday, again prompted by his evil

genius, the Giant takes them into the courtyard and shows them the bones of former pilgrims, so deepening their hopelessness.

The same evening, about midnight, while the giant's wife is advising her husband to search the pockets of the prisoners for picklocks, the two pilgrims begin to pray, and shortly before dawn on Sunday morning they suddenly remember the key of promise and make their escape. The Giant tries to follow them, but the sunshine does not suit his constitution, and he tumbles over in a fit.

This quaint diary is a graphic and accurate record of the growth and progress of spiritual despondency.

First of all, there must be unfaithfulness, in thought, word, or work; possibly not very definite at the outset, but nevertheless involving a deliberate departure from the right path. Such disloyalty may take various forms, a shirking of hardship, a choice of a lower ideal, or it may be some actual sin.

Then follows the capture, secret despondency takes possession and imprisons the soul.

The third stage is downright misery and anguish, followed by the temptation to abandon religion altogether, to commit spiritual suicide, to end the struggle by surrender to the lower self. Despair deepens with the remembrance of others who have fallen. The soul makes a woful inventory of past failures. For the time being

faith in light, truth, and goodness is totally eclipsed.

It is all wonderfully true, and the painfulness of the experience is aggravated by the fact that a man seldom realizes that this intense misery is evidence in itself that there is something in the soul still true to higher things. There is hope even in the bitterness of despair.

The first step towards deliverance is prayer, and prayer brings the remembrance of the promises of God. Once again on the Pilgrim Road, despair is no more to be feared. It cannot live in the sunshine of God's presence.

What is wrong with some of the older men and women of our day? Once they were frank and joyous Christians. They can look back to years of happy service for the Church and for their fellows. Nothing in those old days was too much trouble, and their religious life was one of zest and reality. Now, they worship, though less frequently, with the old congregation—or, possibly, with some other Church where memories of better days do not rise up reproachfully against them. But the old earnestness has gone. They avoid those more spiritual gatherings where the great deeps might be stirred. There was a time when their faces reflected the sincerity of their faith; but the expression is changed, the mouth a little harder, the eyes not quite so frank, you feel as though they were looking at you through a mask. Deep down in their

inmost souls they are not happy, and no worldly gain or pleasure really satisfies. Away back, somewhere in the past, there was a point where they got wrong, some secret sin, some unworthy compromise, neglect of prayer, or disloyalty to principle. It might be difficult for them to say just when the stile was crossed, but for years they have been drifting farther and farther from the Pilgrim Road. They *know* that they are not in it now ; and it becomes easier every day to do things which, once upon a time, they would have regarded as out of harmony with Christian conduct. Inwardly the result is gloom ; outwardly they are more or less cynical and pessimistic in their view of life. It is not easy to get back, and there are those like the men seen by Christian and Hopeful from the Delectable Mountains, blind wanderers among the graves of better things.

The incident of Doubting Castle is very suggestive of what the old mediaeval writers called the sin of Accidie. It is curious that Chaucer with his gay, lightsome spirit, and Dante, with his stern criticism of human character, both describe in vivid language the gloomy despondency which settles on some lives and destroys the gladness of the soul. To them and to others this spirit of gloom which they called Accidie was a mortal sin. In a striking passage from a very early writer, quoted by Bishop Paget in a profoundly interesting Essay on the subject, its

causes are traced to just such spiritual unfaithfulness as we find in Bunyan's narrative of the pilgrims, and the closing words remind us of their deliverance. Accidie is personified, and she is represented as saying :

' They who summon me are many ; sometimes it is dullness and senselessness of soul that bids me come, sometimes it is forgetfulness of things above : ay, and there are times when it is excess of toil. My adversaries are the singing of psalms and the labour of the hands : the thought of death is my enemy, but *that which kills me outright is prayer*, with the sure hope of glory.'

It is well for us to recognize the evil of this dreary, despondent spirit, and that if by failure in loyalty we become its captives, it may take some painful and bitter experience to bring us back to the right path. Realizing this, another passage from Bishop Paget is worth quoting.

' Surely,' he says, ' no poet of the present day, and none perhaps since Dante, has so truly told the inner character of accidie, or touched more skilfully the secret of its sinfulness than Robert Louis Stevenson, in the graceful, noble lines which he has entitled "The Celestial Surgeon" :

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness ;

If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face ;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not ; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain ;—
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake ;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose Thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in.

Those who live in the spirit of such words will not be tempted aside by any Bypath Meadow, and they will certainly escape the clutches of Giant Despair.

XI

THE MOUNTAINS OF VISION

'I am travelling, not to age, but to youth—not from joy to peace, but from peace to joy. I have begun in the mists of manhood; I have trusted where I cannot trace. One day I shall be a child, and see; and then the trees of the forest shall clap their hands. . . . I have entered by the strait gate; I have journeyed by the narrow way; when I reach the Father's house I shall begin to be merry.'

GEORGE MATHESON, D.D.

'By surrender of your life to God your mature manhood will be strong in gathered wisdom, in practical usefulness, and in ripening character. Youth will ever "mount upon wings"; but as great a triumph it is that mid-life shall "run and not be weary," and old age "walk and not faint.''

CHARLES WELCH.

XI

THE MOUNTAINS OF VISION

THE last steps of the Pilgrim Way are a study in maturity. The middle years are past, and the two companions are nearing the Great Mystery.

The popular conception of age is that it is a going downhill ; Bunyan makes it an ascent into a mountain land, a place of vision. True, the physical powers must at this stage show signs of failure. For the first time, when they meet the Shepherds, Christian and Hopeful are pictured as leaning on their staves, ‘as is common with weary pilgrims.’ But in eager interest and resolute purpose they are as strong as ever.

The landscape is rich and beautiful, a region of gardens, orchards, and springs of water, and the whole plenteous mountain side free to the travellers.

The names of the Shepherds—Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere—represent personifications of qualities in the pilgrims themselves, qualities a Christian man ought to gain as he advances in life, and the possession of which will help to enlighten him as to his

future progress. It is only for the purpose of the allegory that they are spoken of as the guardians of the hills instructing those who reach their sunny heights.

Through the Shepherds the two friends learn many things that were not so clear in the earlier stages of the journey—dangers they have avoided and perils yet to come.

The four glimpses of truth given to them among the Delectable Mountains correspond with the four names and the powers of soul they signify.

Surely it was Knowledge who took them to the top of the Hill Error, with a precipice at the foot of which they see the mangled remains of pilgrims who strayed from the right path. And with equal naturalness it would be Experience, who, from the Hill Caution, showed them the blind men stumbling among the dead victims of Giant Despair, a fate from which they narrowly escaped. And it would be Watchful who pointed out the Door in the Hillside, a Byway to Hell, reminding them that even at this late stage of the journey they must not allow themselves to be lulled into false security. And last of all Sincere would lead them to the Hill Clear, from which in good weather the Gates of the Celestial City might be seen. But the trembling hands of the pilgrims, deeply moved by what they have already learned, cannot hold the glass. ‘Yet they thought they saw something like the Gate, and also some of the Glory of the place.’

It was also on these mountain heights that these wise monitors warned them of coming dangers, of the Flatterer with his wiles, and the slumbrous atmosphere of the Enchanted Land. Bunyan possessed an almost uncanny knowledge of human nature. Age, a time of life when Christian men and women may have deep spiritual enjoyment and far-reaching vision; but, at the same time, a period with its own peculiar and subtle temptations.

Before these perils are actually encountered, one or two incidents call for attention.

The first of these is the encounter with Ignorance, the least satisfactory episode in the book, and one that may be passed over briefly as of less importance than others. Bunyan says at this point, 'I slept and dreamed again.' It is the first break in the continuous flow of the allegory, and is thought by Dr. Brown to indicate a release from prison. This is very probable, for as the Rev. Robert Stevenson has pointed out in his *Exposition*, Bunyan was engaged the very next year after his release in a heated controversy on Justification by Faith, of which controversy he regards the narrative of Ignorance to be an echo. Men are never at their noblest in disputation, and this may account for the hardness and severity with which poor Ignorance is treated.

And yet we cannot forget that there is an ignorance which is wilful and obstinate, and there are some witty and realistic touches in

the story. The brisk lad came from the Country of Conceit. Ignorance is emptiness ; and as in nature nothing is really empty, so the vacant mind must be occupied by something, and conceit is usually the gas that fills it. When reminded that he did not enter by the Wicket Gate, Ignorance replies very pertly, ‘ All the world knows the Wicket Gate is a long way off our country.’ He *hopes* all will be well. His mind is ‘ full of good notions.’ His ‘ heart tells ’ him he is all right, and his ‘ heart and life agree.’ And when reminded that the heart may be deceitful, he protests, ‘ I will never believe that my heart is so bad.’ He soon falls behind and is not seen again till the close of the pilgrimage.

The story of Littlefaith and the Rogues is a vignette of seventeenth-century life. A traveller, lonely and fearful, sleeps by the wayside. Just as he rouses himself in the morning, three highwaymen set upon him, and he goes as ‘ white as a clout.’ One demands his purse, another rifles his pockets, and a third hits him with a cudgel. On a sudden alarm they take to their heels and leave the man faint and bleeding.

Tales such as these were familiar enough in Bunyan’s time. They were the stock-in-trade of every inn, the bugbear of nervous travellers. By Littlefaith, Bunyan wishes us to understand a Christian man, who for want of faith and courage at some crisis in his spiritual life loses all comfort, peace, and strength, and who limps all the rest

of the way a grumbling, poverty-stricken fellow. He is not a man who loses religion altogether. He keeps his 'jewels,' the inward assurance that he belongs to God: but he loses all his ready money. He is badly off and has to beg his way, and what is more, scatters 'all the rest of the way with nothing but doleful and bitter complaints.'

Of the three temptations the Enchanted Ground is the only one that calls for special note. It is in complete contrast to the mountains. On the heights sunshine and an invigorating atmosphere, and here a thick murky atmosphere, in which it is difficult to keep awake. It would be easy to cease all effort and give way to sleep. The pilgrims fight against it and encourage one another with memories of conflicts past and gone. For the first time we hear the story of Hopeful and how he started on pilgrimage. So, in happy companionship, they escape the last peril of all and come within sight of the goal.

On the whole, Bunyan gives a stimulating picture of age, and it may be interesting to set beside it one of the noblest conceptions of life ever expressed in poetic form—Robert Browning's '*Rabbi ben Ezra*'.

A common fallacy, partly due, no doubt, to the cynical philosophy of those who have unworthily failed, and partly to misfortunes hardly endured, is that youth is the best time of life. There are many whose message to those younger than themselves is, 'Make the most of your youth,

enjoy yourselves while you can, you will never have such a good time again'—a doctrine compounded in about equal proportions of platitude and error, and an echo of Koheleth's pessimistic lament, 'All that cometh is vanity.' Youth is a delightful time; sunny, fair, joyous, and eager; but when men go further and say it is the only good time, our protest instinctively clothes itself in Arthur Hugh Clough's indignant words:

Receive it not, Believe it not,
Believe it not, O man !

Infinitely finer is the philosophy of Robert Browning, put into the lips of the old Rabbi of Cordova; the philosophy of a man who faced the whole of life, its shadow as well as its radiance, and carried to the very threshold of the unseen a brave belief in soul and an unconquerable confidence in God :

Grow old along with me !
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made !
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned.
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all nor be afraid !'

Those who have been drawn aside into life's by-paths, and who have never attained the higher Way, may regard this as mere irrational optimism; but there are many who, radiant and large-

hearted in spite of years, can bear testimony to the truth of the poet's words.

'The best is yet to be.' How inspiring for the young, to look forward to a *crescendo* of life's music, instead of dreary disillusion and multiplying discords!

There will be conflict and difficulty, but let the soul meet them bravely, even gaily.

Then welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go !
 Be our joys three-parts pain !
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
 Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the
 throe !

Life is the shaping of a Cup, and if we let the Great Potter work His will with us, whatever we may be in the eyes of men we shall be of 'worth to God.' But it takes the whole of life. Youth is the period of plastic clay when the cup may be shaped. All after-experience is meant for its enrichment, until, complete and beautiful, it shall be fit to be lifted high in the Master's hand at some great banquet, a vessel 'meet for the Master's use.'

So take and use Thy work,
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim.
 My times be in Thy hand !
 Perfect the cup as planned !
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the
 same !

No two men could differ more widely than Browning and John Bunyan. And yet the idea is the same. Life is a whole, not a series of unrelated fragments. The figures differ, but the teaching is one. Bunyan uses the symbol of a journey. One unceasing purpose runs through it all from the Wicket Gate to the Delectable Mountains and the margin of the river. And for the pilgrim loyal to God and truth there is sunshine and vision as the road nears its glorious goal. In Bunyan's allegory there is more insistence on the spiritual perils that beset the traveller almost to the very end ; but nevertheless it is a picture that stimulates effort and heartens the soul, for it holds forth the promise of complete and final achievement.

XII

THE BLESSED LAND

*'When our beloved rise
To gird them for the ford, and pass
From wilderness to springing grass,
From barren waste to living green,—
We weep that they no more are seen,
And that the river flows between.'*

*Ah, could we follow where they go,
And pierce the holy shade they find,—
One grief were ours—to stay behind!
One hope—to join the Blest Unseen!
To plant our steps where theirs have been
And find no river flows between.'*

C. FRASER TYTLER.

'Never say of me that I am dead.'

ROBERT BROWNING.

XII

THE BLESSED LAND

BEYOND the Enchanted Ground the pilgrims at last found a place of rest. To many travellers along the Pilgrim Road this is denied. As with Faithful, the end comes in the heyday of active life. More swiftly, yet none the less certainly, they reach their goal. But John Bunyan believed in the possibility of a beautiful old age for those to whom is granted the full measure of life ; a waiting by the river that shall not be weariness, but peace. ‘At evening time it shall be light.’

This peaceful land, reached by Christian and Hopeful after all their conflicts and temptations, was ‘the land of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant.’ Here ‘they heard continually the voice of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth.’ For ‘in this country the sun shineth night and day.’

‘It was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of reach of Giant Despair ; neither from this place could they so much as see Doubting Castle.’

Mountain and valley lie behind,
The slough is crossed, the wicket passed.
Doubt and despair, sorrow and sin,
Giant and fiend conquered at last.
Neglect is changed to honour now,
The heavy cross may be laid down ;
The white head wins and wears at last
The prophet's, not the martyr's crown.

'Here they were within sight of the city they were going to ; also here met they some of the inhabitants thereof ; for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was on the borders of heaven.'

'As they walked in this land they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the Kingdom to which they were bound.'

'Nearer and nearer.'

In the second part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which Bunyan finds occasional difficulty in maintaining the consistency of the allegory, the different stages of life seem to interpenetrate. There are children in the Blessed Land, in it though not of it, ministering joyously to the aged pilgrims who are waiting for their summons to the presence of the King. All stages of the road may be understood in some measure by young and old if there be intelligent sympathy.

In these last pages of the book we find none of the conventional ideas of death. The very word is avoided. It is only used three times,

twice in scriptural quotations, and once as referring to something that belongs rather to *earth* than to this borderland of eternity. And when the pilgrims pass through the river and continue their triumphal journey, the old earthly garments simply fall away and they are clothed with the new vesture of immortality. The whole atmosphere throbs with warm, joyous, invigorating life.

The popular conception of death, even among Christian people, is almost pagan in its gloominess. Heedless of the tender words of Jesus Himself, and of the abundant entrance into life of tens of thousands of His followers, we persist in surrounding the passing of the spirit with every feature of woe and lamentation ; and by close-drawn blinds and black mourning attire make it all but impossible for the soul to rise above its natural sorrow to the hope and victory which are ours by right. It was never meant to be so. 'Life and incorruption' have been 'brought to light' through the gospel ; and it is an unworthy thing for us to dwell upon death and painful decay.

When we turn to these last days of tarrying on the Pilgrim Road we pass away completely from all unnatural thoughts of what we so mistakenly call the end of life. It is *not* the end, it is a travelling onward. The two countries blend. The shining ones walk on both sides of the river. All through Bunyan's words there

runs the strain of an exultant faith. The river, the cloud ascent, the gates, the shining city are merely symbols, an attempt to clothe thoughts too big for utterance in vivid and picturesque imagery. But behind the symbols there is a feeling of things that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man.'

Still the question presses, Is such an experience as Bunyan describes really possible? Let St. Paul be our answer. Consider how grandly his spirit rose above bodily weakness, solitude, and imprisonment, triumphant to the very end. Phillips Brooks finds in him the picture of an ideal old age, and contrasts him with those who fail for want of his invincible faith in Christ.

' Men lose their love and trust and hope as they grow old. Here was a man, St. Paul, who kept them all fresh to the last. Men cease to have strong convictions, and grow cynical or careless. Here was a man who believed more and not less as he knew more of God, and of himself, and of the world. His old age did not come creeping into port, a wreck, with broken masts and rudder gone, but full-sailed still, and strong for other voyages in other seas. We are sure that his was the old age God loves to see; that the careless and the hopeless and the faithless are the failures. To such men as Paul alone is God's promise to David

fulfilled : "With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

If we seek for a modern instance we can hardly find a better one than our saintly poet of the Victorian Age, Lord Tennyson. For him old age was a veritable Land of Beulah. He never lost touch with life. A visitor who talked with him during the last days of his life was deeply impressed by the fact that in his spirit there was 'a youthfulness which age could not destroy.' In conversation one day he disputed Emerson's saying, 'Only to youth the Spring is Spring.' 'For,' said he, 'Age does feel the joy of Spring, though Age can only crawl on the bridge, while youth skips the brook.' His attitude towards the Beyond is illustrated by the noble lines written to Queen Victoria on the death of the Duke of Clarence :

The face of Death is toward the Sun of Life,
His shadow darkens earth ; his truer name
Is Onward, no discordance in the roll
And march of the Eternal Harmony
Whereto the worlds beat time, tho' faintly heard,
Until the great Hereafter.

His fearless personal faith is expressed in that last poem which has so strongly gripped the popular imagination :

For though from out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

And so we come to the crossing of the pilgrims. The last few pages of the allegory are beyond comment. Clothed in golden symbolism, they speak to the soul of a reality beyond all human telling. The blessedness of the Larger Life is hidden in mystery, and Bunyan's words, though they do not dispel the cloud of mystery, suffuse it with the roseate light of faith. The Pilgrim Road is ended ; the goal is reached.

' Now while they were thus drawing towards the gate, behold a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them ; to whom it was said by the other two Shining Ones, These are the men that have loved our Lord when they were in the world, and that have forsaken all for His holy name ; and He hath sent us to fetch them, and we have brought them thus far on their desired journey, that they may go in and look their Redeemer in the face with joy.'

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' Now I saw in my Dream that these two men went in at the gate ; and lo ! as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them ; the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my Dream that all the bells in the city rang

again for joy, and that it was said unto them, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." I also heard the men themselves sing with a loud voice saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." (Rev. v. 13.)

'Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the city shone like the sun ; the streets also were paved with gold ; and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps, to sing praises withal.

'There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord !" And after that they shut up the gates ; which when I had seen, I wished myself among them.'

The golden evening brightens in the west ;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest ;
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.

Alleluia !

XIII

THE WATCHWORDS OF THE ROAD

'Always add, always proceed; neither stand still, nor go back, nor deviate. He that standeth still proceedeth not; he goeth back that continueth not; he deviateth that revolteth.'

ST. AUGUSTINE.

'If your eye is on the Eternal, your intellect will grow, and your opinions and actions will have a beauty which no learning or combined advantages of other men can rival.'

EMERSON.

*'I follow, follow, sure to meet the sun,
And confident that what the future yields
Will be the right, unless myself be wrong.'*

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

XIII

THE WATCHWORDS OF THE ROAD

WE have closed the book, and now we take it up again and ask ourselves, What is its value to us who live in a modern day ? Is it only a masterpiece of literature ? a quaint and beautiful allegory of merely archaic interest ? Or has it a permanent message ? Among the many voices that speak to us, is it still a living voice ?

In some ways our point of view has altered since John Bunyan's time. The advance of science ; our fuller knowledge of the Bible and the literature of the past ; and above all the study of the Jesus of history—His life, times, and mighty influence on human thought, have profoundly modified our conception of religion. Christianity, to-day, at its best, is a larger and finer thing than it ever was. And yet, in the things that matter most, we still need those vital principles which give permanent worth to the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Before considering these it may be well to point out some features of modern Christian thought which are almost or altogether absent

from the allegory ; and if this seems to involve a certain amount of criticism of Bunyan's conception of Christianity, it is with no disrespect to the great qualities of mind and heart that makes us everlastingly his debtors.

It is not unfair to say that the religion of the Pilgrims is too exclusively self-centred. They are entirely absorbed in the saving of their own souls, and make little or no effort to induce others to go on pilgrimage. In a word, we miss the evangelistic note. Christian, it is true, when he sets out on his journey, invites Pliable and Obstinate to join him, but there is scarcely any other instance of his attempting to win men from their error. Those he meets on the way, like Talkative and By-ends, he scolds and rates, but there is no note of persuasion. Even in Vanity Fair, while the two pilgrims denounce sin and stand firmly by their principles, they make no attempt to alter the mind of their persecutors.

There is also a total absence of any missionary enthusiasm in the larger sense of the term. The one aim of the pilgrims is to reach a better world ; and the thought of the conquest of the world that now is for Jesus Christ never seems to enter their minds. The spirit that fired a Francis of Assisi or a John Wesley has no parallel among the men of the pilgrimage.

Nor has Bunyan very much to say about religion in daily life. Business and the workaday world hold a very subordinate place in his mind.

This is no doubt due in part to the limitations of the allegory ; but here, as in the *Imitation of Christ*, the inner religious life is everything ; and the duties, responsibilities, and toils of our human lot get scant consideration. Christian Ethics represents a field of thought that in Bunyan's day received little cultivation.

The idea of social service is one of comparatively modern growth, and we do not expect to find it in a book written from the old Puritan point of view. Yet we may count it a gain that it holds a high place in Christian thought to-day. It is our business, not merely to look after our own spiritual welfare, but to make the world a sweeter and more wholesome place by service for others. 'None of us liveth unto himself.' 'We are members one of another.' More and more we feel the truth of Mazzini's words, 'Thou canst not even if thou wouldest separate thy life from that of humanity. Thou livest in it, by it, and for it. Thy soul cannot rid itself of the influence of the elements amongst which it moves.' Such a thought as this would seem strange on Bunyan's lips, though, personally, he was a very kindly man, and brought about his last illness by a journey undertaken in order to reconcile father and son. No doubt many conceptions on which we pride ourselves, though not formulated, existed in germ, and found individual expression long ago. We have only minted the gold already discovered by great souls of the past.

Turning to the deepest things of the spiritual life, there are not many in which we have the advantage of John Bunyan. Yet there is one, and it is so important that it cannot be passed over. Bunyan had a very tender and loyal affection for Jesus Christ. In unselfish and passionate devotion he stands on a plane far above us, and we can only long to be like him. Yet in some ways Christ is more real to us than to the Dreamer of Bedford. We know far more about His earthly life, His sweet humanity, His perfect sympathy with us in our earthly sorrows and temptations. Bunyan's devotion was for the Crucified One ; *we* think, possibly more than he did, of the God made man,

God Himself,
Creator and Sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile.

And our more perfect knowledge of His gracious life, His experience of human sorrow and temptation, awakens in us a wonderful tenderness and a deeper understanding of every successive stage from Manger to Cross. With us, too, the Resurrection, with its victorious vitalizing message, holds a place which has no parallel in the Puritan thinker's theology, adding to our vivid realization of the humanity of Jesus the still greater conception of the living Christ of to-day.

Yet, notwithstanding all the differences that

time has wrought, it is impossible to read the *Pilgrim's Progress* and not feel that it breathes a spirit which is of the essence of religion in every age. Its watchwords are Earnestness and Eternity.

The earnestness of the book is tremendous. From the moment when Christian begins to run the journey is one continuous overcoming. The wicket gate, the narrow way, the strenuous hill, the valley of peril, the city with its persecutions, the multiform dangers of the later road, are all illustrative of this; and at every point we see a man desperately determined, 'baffled to fight better,' but ever fighting, pressing on to a definite goal.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *The Celestial Railroad*, seems to hint that the Christian world of to-day has lost this indomitable spirit and has capitulated to ease, luxury, and comfort. We have lost, so he suggests, the old pilgrim note.

He imagines himself in his dreams revisiting the scenes of Bunyan's famous allegory, and learns with great interest that a limited company has been formed and a railway constructed from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. The Slough of Despond is bridged over, though he is not quite easy in his mind as, in the station bus, he crosses the shaky structure to the fine new railway station erected on the site of the Wicket Gate. Evangelist now sits in a roomy booking-office serving out to travellers, not the

old mystic roll, but neat little cardboard tickets. Most surprising of all is the train itself, with a luggage van for ‘burdens,’ comfortably upholstered carriages, and—the masterstroke of the whole business—Apollyon himself engaged as stoker and engine-driver. There are still a few poor pilgrims who obstinately oppose these new-fangled inventions and who persist in jogging along the old route staff in hand. But the majority prefer to rattle along the railway with no trouble to themselves, though there is more than a doubt at the end of the story whether they get to the right destination at last.

It is a clever satire, not altogether undeserved. Religion, with the majority, costs far too little. We may have finer conceptions of God and religion ; but it is a question whether, with our larger thought, we are making as much of our lives as the men of the seventeenth century. There is a broad contrast between the comfortable creeds, cushioned pews, and ease-loving congregations all too frequent, and the stern religion of men to whom the whole of life was a conflict with sin and wrong.

We need intensely in our modern life the purposefulness of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Indeed, the note of earnestness rings out clearly from all Bunyan's writings. There is a telling passage in a sermon of his, entitled ‘The Heavenly Footman,’ which might have been written as a comment on Christian’s journey :

' Soul, take this counsel, and say, " Satan, sin, lust, pleasure, profit, pride, friends, companions, and everything else, let me alone, stand off, come not nigh me, for I am running for my soul, for God, for Christ, from hell and everlasting damnation. If I win, I win all ; and if I lose, I lose all. Let me alone, for I will not hear." So run ! '

It is in such a spirit as this that all great souls meet. In words like these we seem to hear the echo of the ' *Imitatio Christi*. '

' Why wilt thou defer thy good purpose from day to day ? Arise and begin this very instant, and say, " Now is the time to be doing, now is the time to be stirring, now is the time to amend myself." '

' Thou must pass through fire and water before thou canst come to a place of refreshment.

' Unless thou dost earnestly force thyself thou shalt never get the victory over sin.'

The very variety of life emphasizes the need for Earnestness. It was easier when interests were few. To realize such a spirit in the complicated experience of to-day is a totally different thing. It can only be attained if beneath the ten thousand claims of daily life there be a deep, strong, underlying power, carrying us onward, never forgotten, aiming through all lesser aims at the one supreme goal.

And this is only possible to those who feel the meaning of the other watchword of the Road—Eternity.

We must regain the pilgrim spirit. Earth at its best—and we may freely acknowledge that it possesses an immensity of interest, stimulating, exciting, fascinating, wonderful—at its very best, is unsatisfying.

In Stephen Graham's story of his journey *With Poor Emigrants to America* there is a significant passage. America, in his estimation, is about the best that earth can offer. He felt its indefinable charm. He saw it as a land where hope, energy, and vitality throb in the air you breathe. He saw, too, its seamiest side as he tramped its roads, slept in the open, and mingled with the everyday workers of unlovely cities which nevertheless are pushing on to a larger prosperity. For that prosperity has by no means reached its zenith.

‘The more America improves, the more will it prove a place of success, of material well-being, of physical health, and sound eugenically established men and women.’

But it is too happy for him. He has a strange feeling of the glory of ‘failure, danger, calamity, incertitude.’

‘For this world is not a satisfying home, and there are those who confess them-

selves strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.'

In our most thoughtful moments we know that Stephen Graham is right ; and, paradoxical as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that if we are to have the best here—here and now—we must never forget that we are strangers and pilgrims. We belong to Eternity, and Eternity is already here.

In Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* there is a scene where Wilhelm is led by Natalia into the Hall of the Past. It was a noble hall, built by a scholar for his resting-place. It was like an Egyptian temple, but the rich sculptures and decorations within conveyed no suggestion of death. Everything was eloquent of life, paintings of the mother and her child, the bearded father playing with his son, the maiden filling her pitcher at the fountain. At the far end of the building was the marble figure of the founder, reclining upon a couch, with his eyes fixed intently upon a scroll in his right hand on which were inscribed the words :

‘THINK OF LIVING.’

A little later in the narrative we are told how Wilhelm visited the great Hall for the second time. A child whom he had known and loved was to be laid to rest. Yet even so there was none of the grim symbolism of death. Soft tapestries draped the walls, lights were burning,

and the still form of the beautiful child was surrounded by the radiance of flowers, while her companions sang tender songs of life, love, and joyous labour. And to Wilhelm as he turned to go came the choral message :

‘Travel, travel back into life ! Take with you holy Earnestness : for Earnestness alone makes life Eternity.’

Earnestness and Eternity: the Watchwords of the Pilgrim Road. In the strength of them let us journey on until upon our gaze shall break the mystery of the Unseen.

On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

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